Investigating Detectives, Inc. by **DON McGREGOR**

Gerber Sues Marvel . . . .Swamp Thing Movie . . . .Elfquest: The World of the Wolf-Rider . . . .and much more!

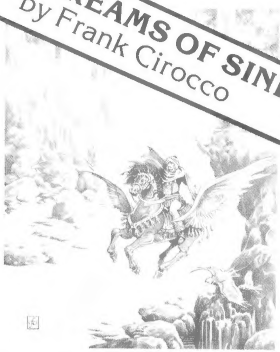
The Comic Times

No. 4 **JAN.** **$2.00**

In this issue: **Jim Shooter**

"MY PLAN IS TO MAKE THIS PLACE BIGGER THAN DISNEY"

SEVEN DREAMS OF SINBAD
by Frank Cirocco



The debut portfolio of the Schanes and Schanes line, and still the favorite of many, was *Land of Shadows* by Frank Cirocco. It was a best-seller and very few remain. We are pleased to announce a new release by Cirocco, *Seven Dreams of Sinbad*. The artwork for these beautiful and mysterious plates is executed in pencils and delicate gray tones. The artwork is reproduced using a duo-tone process, highlighting the subtlety of the work.

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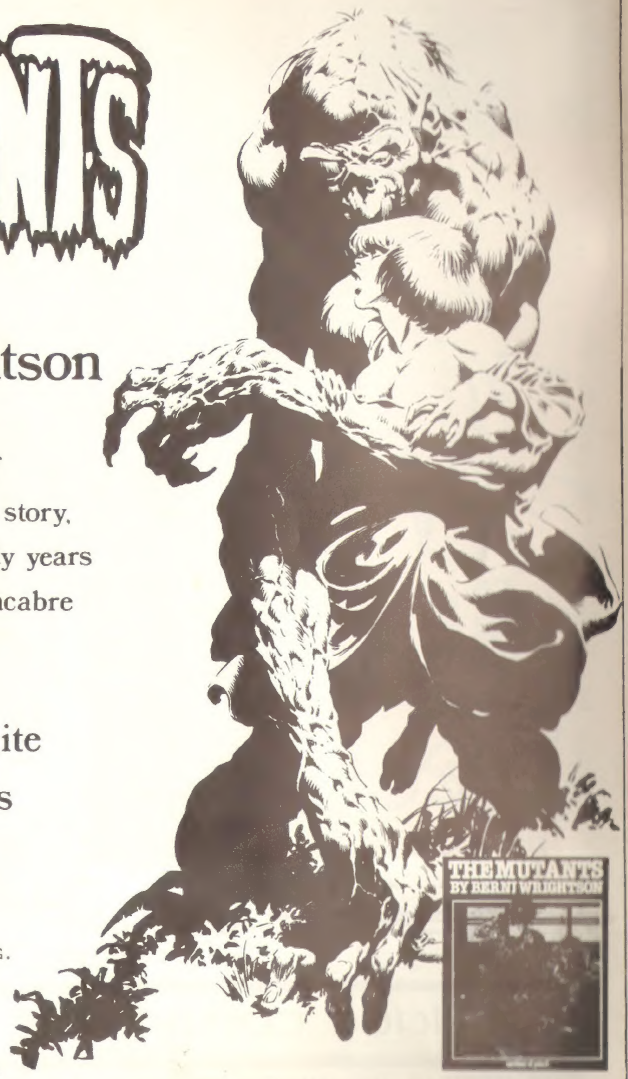

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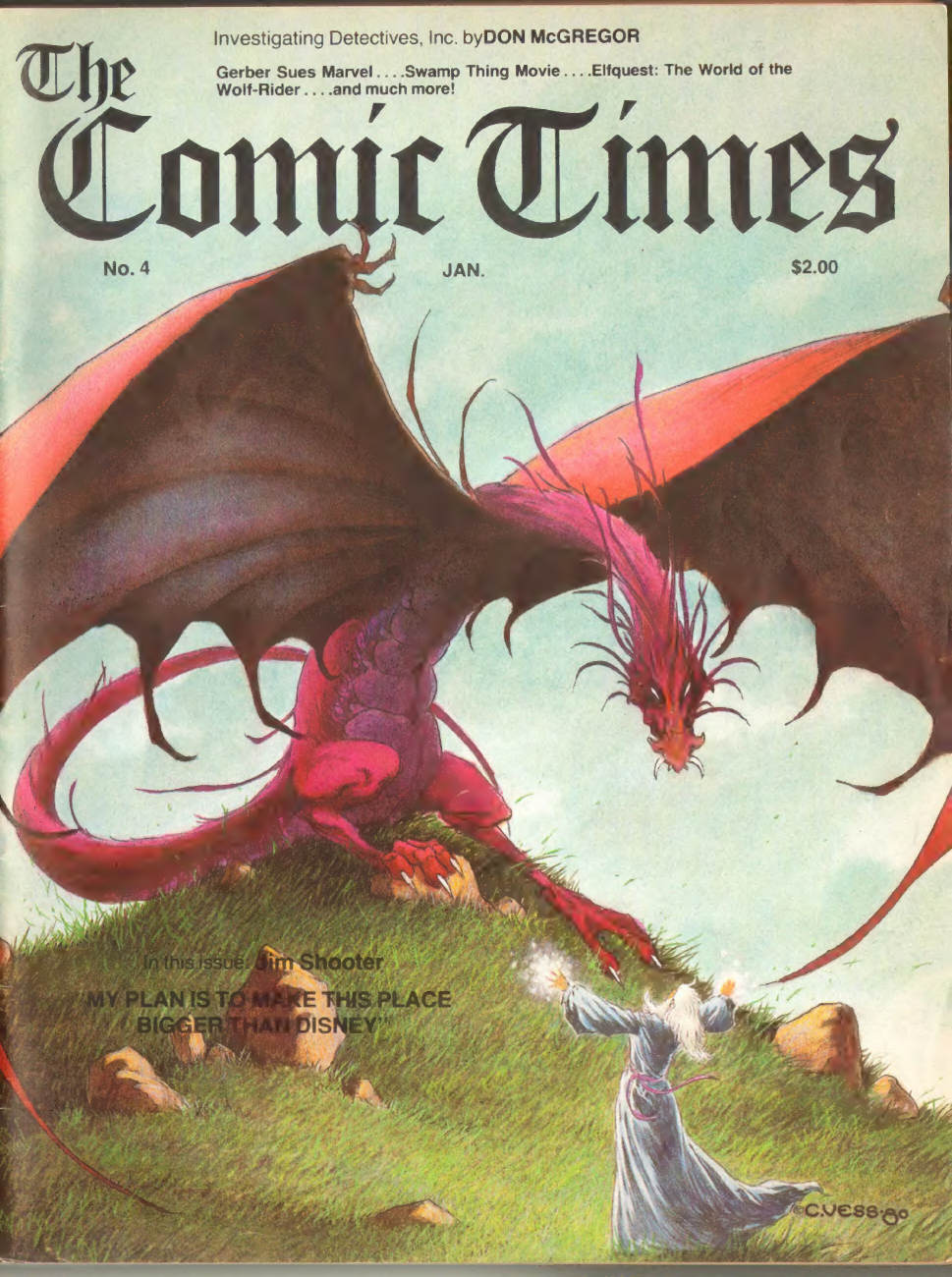

In this issue: **Jim Shooter**

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The Comic Times

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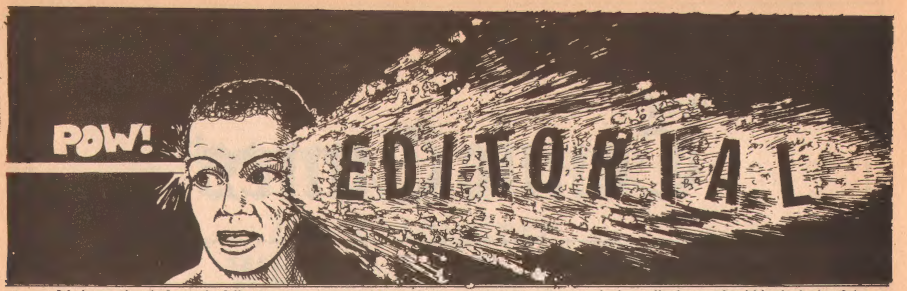

Illustration by Dan Perkins

It's been a hectic 2 months folks, but we finally got this issue to you. When you miss a deadline, the severity of that mistake tends to compound itself by some weird application of Malthusian mathematical theory. All of the usual hassles (much too complicated and too dull to explain here) which are an inherent part of publishing seemed to conspire against us and kept delaying publication. We felt that it was worth taking a little extra time to give you the best issue we could, instead of merely slapping something together to meet our deadline. Despite our tardiness, I hope you feel the same way.

Meanwhile, I'm happy to report that it appears as though we're beginning to find an audience for our different approach. Our sales have steadily increased from issue to issue. Number 3 is a virtual sellout (and may be completely sold out by the time you read this). So thanks for the support, we appreciate it.

* * *

In the chaos of putting together a magazine, one sometimes forgets to acknowledge the people immediately surrounding you, even though their contributions often have the most effect on your magazine. I've been guilty of this fault in the case of Owen Long.

Owen became our regular art director with issue 2 and was directly responsible for the improved look of our magazine. Over the ensuing months, Owen established a definite look for **The Comic Times** and gave it its own visual identity. He proved to be an excellent sounding board for suggestions and ideas and although our critical sensibilities often clashed, we were able to meld those differences into one organic whole. It was exciting to create a magazine with Owen because of his constant enthusiasm and his total willingness to experiment.

Unfortunately this acknowledgement has a bit of an ironic twist. It recently became necessary to cut costs and Owen, along with staffer Dan Perkins, had to be let go to balance the budget. It's been fun working with both of them and I wish them the best of luck in whatever they attempt. I also hope that these pages will feature some freelance work from both Owen and Dan in the months to come now that they have the time to channel their creative energies in that direction (Did you get the hint, guys?).

* * *

Jim Shooter is the subject of the last installment of David M. Singer's *Chatting With . . .* series in **"My Plan Is To Make This Place Bigger Than Disney."** In an effort to make this interview as comprehensive and timely as possible, I reinterviewed Jim 4 months after David's initial chat. Although it isn't credited as such within the body of the article, let's see if you eagle-eyed readers can spot what Jim said in June and what he said in October.

In his article, **Investigating Detectives, Inc.** Don McGregor offers a behind the scenes look at the process behind the creation of his new book, *Detectives, Inc.* To complement Don's insights, Frank Lovece examines this ground-breaking book in his review, **An Urban Visual Novel**

John Warner profiles **Children of the Stars** artist Charles Vess in **Nocturnal Heir**. To illustrate the wide range of his talents, Charles also contributed the painting that adorns our front cover.

Both John and I felt that it would be best to delay his fine short story, **Audition** until he could apply the finishing touches to the story. So look for **Audition** next issue, as well as a number of stunning illustrations by regular contributor Rick Bryant.

Our coverage of the media expands as 2 new columns join regular features, **Books** by Doug Murray and **The James Burns Media Report**. Ed Kronsbein begins **Chasing the Rock** in the premiere installment of his new music review column and Tom Bierbaum's **Down the Tube** focuses its uniquely personal vision on Carl Sagen's *Cosmos*.

The team of Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald return with their salute to the genius of Tex Avery. **Fred (Tex) Avery, 1908-1980** is the obituary that *should* have appeared in *The New York Times*. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to work with Jerry, who is an acknowledged expert on the history of animation.

Wendy and Richard Pini's successful alternative comic book series is spotlighted in Paula O'Keefe's **Elfquest: The World of the Wolf-Riders**. Paula is a long time follower of the Elfquest series and she jumped at the chance to write this article. Hopefully you will see more of Paula's work in the months to come.

My one contribution to this issue is a close-up of the new Saturday morning TV hit, **Thundarr the Barbarian**. **Thundarr** is a Steve Gerber — Joe Ruby co-creation that features the contributions of Jack Kirby, Alex Toth and Alfredo Alcala. I would like to thank both Steve Gerber and Jodi Berman for their assistance in the preparation of this article.

So enjoy the issue and let us know what you think. We'll be waiting to hear from you.

Stay loose,

Mark Hoffer

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Graphic by Richard Bruning

Dear Dennis,

I just wanted to tell you how impressed I was with THE COMIC TIMES #2. Around here people were calling #1 "THE COMIC CLONE," but #2 really has shown what you can do. I was especially impressed with the Steve Englehart interview (even though the unhaftoned comic book pages looked really sloppy) and think it's equal with anything being done by the competition.

I was pleased to see you giving notice to Rick Bryant as he will also be having a cover coming up on RBCC #152, in full color.

On the subject of "Whatever Happened To...?" I suggest Reed Crandall. I heard a couple of years ago that he was working as a night watchman in New York City because advancing age had robbed him of his ability to draw. I think that this would be more than well worth looking in to.

Sincerely,
Jim Van Hise
10885 Angola Road
San Diego, CA. 92126

Reed Crandall is an excellent suggestion. What about the rest of you? Who would you like to see featured in "Whatever Happened To . . . "? Write and let us know. (MG)

Dear Mark,

I greatly enjoyed your first issue. "The Kirby Experiment" was very good. I am also happy to see you print full credits of the movies you review—they are quite informative. To re-but Don McGregor's review of *The Shining* consider the following.

The response to Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* has been typical of a Kubrick movie, with reviewers alternately declaring it a masterpiece and a pointless exercise in film theory. I have read nine reviews. Four praise the movie. Four degrade the movie. One puts the movie right in the middle. Only Stephen Harvey in *Saturday Review* found *nothing* to like in the movie.

Of all the negative reviews I have seen, Don McGregor's was the most comprehensive. Unfortunately, like the other reviewers who didn't like the movie, he failed to grasp the depth Kubrick has given the movie.

Richard Schickel called the movie an "anti-horror horror film" in *Time*. Richard T. Jameson called the movie "a horror movie that isn't a horror movie" in *Film Comment*. McGregor makes brief mention of the film working as a parody. He should have delved into it more, for this would have offered an explanation for several scenes of the movie. For instance, there is the elevator of blood. A sickening scene, to be sure, but also oddly out of place. And the scene of the dark room filled with cobwebs and skeletons. True fright material, right? But it is incredibly boring, almost breaking the tension created as Jack chases Danny through the hedge maze. It is as if Kubrick were telling us, "You people want blood in your horror films—the more, the better. Okay, I'll give you an entire elevator of it! Is that enough blood for you? Rather boring, isn't it? You want dark, musty rooms with cobwebs and skeletons? Okay, here's one. Pretty dull, huh? And you've been screaming at *this* stuff? Come over here, and I'll show you some *real* horror!" This whole attitude is established early in the film when Jack talks to Wendy during breakfast. He jokingly feigns frightening talk about *deja vu*, humorously supplying his own spooky sounds. The audience grins. Reincarnation: what a silly thing to be frightened by.

This dual purpose of the movie—parodying horror films while itself being one—is what is causing much confusion among reviewers. But why should it? What Kubrick has constructed is a complex film where we see one movie when viewed from one perspective, and an entirely different movie when viewed from another.

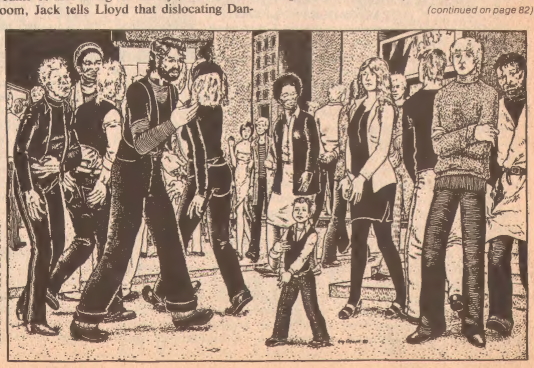
The parody aspect is suggested by almost every reviewer. After all, it is fairly obvious. However, there is another aspect—a much more important one—that has been mentioned only by Jameson. Reviewers who missed asking the following question missed a *large* part of the movie.

The question is: What character(s) does Jack *Torrance* play? Not Jack Nicholson, but Jack Torrance. For throughout the film, he plays *many* characters. But the important point is that he plays them all *poorly*. In the interview, his man-of-the-world, satisfy-the-boss smile isn't quite convincing. His loving-father role begins to break down after only one month in the hotel alone with his family, while the revelation of his past makes us doubt his sincerity at the role in the first place. When Jack is in his room talking to Danny about the hotel, he tries to play the loving father once again, but both Danny and the audience know that it is an act—a very poor act. (Just two days later, Jack dreams of murdering his family.) In the Gold Room, Jack tells Lloyd that dislocating Danny's shoulder was "an accident, completely unintentional," but he does not convince us for a second. Later, when Jack is talking with Grady in the men's room, he slips into another role: the tough guy, just daring Grady to disagree with him. But the role drops quickly. By the end of the scene, *Grady* is telling *Jack* what to do, and Jack's response is only silence. Throughout the entire film, Jack plays the role of the writer, at which he clearly fails. And most importantly, Jack Torrance plays the madman, but through his loathsome jokes and his failure to eliminate his family, he cannot even succeed at that.

Jack Torrance, then, plays many roles. But who is the man at the center? Who is the actor who plays the parts? We never find out, and it is here that Kubrick establishes the basis for his horror. We see a man whose own identity is so completely submerged by other roles that we can believe his turning to something else for an "authentic" role—one which represents who he truly is. He turns to the hotel, whose history offers him release from his clogged creativity and his snivelling wife. His own emptiness is echoed in the vast, empty hotel and vapid family life. Jack speaks in cliche after cliche ("Writing's been more a way of making ends meet." "I'd sell my goddamn soul for just a glass of beer." "Heeeeeeere's Johnny!"). The emptiness disappears when Jack axes Hallorann. The hotel comes to life. Jack is no longer a dull boy.

Let's face it, Stephen King's novel is basically about an unbalanced man caretaking a haunted hotel. The hotel possesses him—for reasons we aren't entirely sure of—while Jack himself undergoes little change. All of his evil deeds while inside the hotel are attributed to the hotel. And when he takes his first drink, it's no real surprise, for he's been drinking in his imagination for months. He doesn't really even *need* a haunted hotel to set him loose; he's on the verge of childbeating and drunkenness anyway. And yet in the end, he doesn't do *any* of it. The hotel does it all. Kubrick's Jack Torrance, on the other hand, has much better control of both his anger and his liquor. It is *Jack* who tells Ullman that he and Wendy don't drink, so when he takes his first drink, it hits us as a dramatic change in him. And his anger is peeled away layer by layer, gradually, so that the babbling maniac we see at the end is the direct opposite of the Jack we see at the beginning of the film. The important point, though, is

(continued on page 82)



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GUEST COMMENT

ON CRITICISM OF CRITICISM OF CRITICISM . . . THE POINT MISSED

by Herbert Rotfeld

Like many people born around 1950, raised on a regular diet of now-classic TV shows and old movies that filled television time before the present stockpile of show reruns, I am a voracious consumer of many forms of our popular culture. I learned to read with pre-Wertham adventure comics and became a leisure reader about the same time DC was "reinventing" super-heroes. As I grew, so did the field of science-fiction writing. With the growth of the review (or "fan") press in these areas, particularly comics, I have added these to my list of readings. I am not a collector, really, nor am I a fan by any definition of the term—I read all this, and view TV and movies, simply because I enjoy doing so. I am also intelligent enough to think about why I like or dislike a particular effort, or why other people might like it.

While I might sound like I am laying out "credentials" for being a critical reviewer, in reality, no such credentials as such have any meaning or value. To be a reviewer means being able to present your rationale for why something was enjoyable to you or what might have been lacking. Critic is not synonymous for "one who criticizes."

Therein lies my concern with so much of what is found in many comic reviews. I have read so many criticisms of comics, plus movies born of comic characters, all of which tend to lecture on why something is "good" or "bad", as if they need to answer to some higher authority on the value of popular art forms. Terms are bandied about and argued as if they are possessing some'absolute meaning and value: "commercial art," "high art," "writing from the soul," plus the assorted debates on "sales value" versus "quality." It all sounds like an English professor's argument as to the meaning of 100 year old literature, the guardians of proper "high art" fighting against the people who want things to be popular enough for money to be made on the venture. People who are concerned about money are not concerned about quality, or so we are told. It has reached the point where some critics have taken to reviewing each other, criticizing each other's values and the quality of reviews.

ENOUGH ALREADY! AN ABSOLUTE STANDARD OF QUALITY DOES NOT EXIST!

To all this past circumlocutious debate, I say to thee, "Phooey." The critical concern is for quality, but all fandom debate and reviews miss a prime point. Obliquely, some might note the valid assertion that quality refers to originality and realism (more on these in a moment), missing the point that *these two attributes mean different things to different people*. Each individual's own tastes determine which of these items are more important for their enjoyment, and the individual determines whether such attributes are present. Some people are noted as the best movie reviewers not because they have the best sense of taste, but because they have the ability to convey their rationale for liking or disliking a certain movie in such a way that the audience members can relate such evaluations to individual tastes.

Originality *per se* might not need additional definition beyond saying that it relates to how new and different something might be. However, not everyone has the same demands for originality (some actually prefer things to be consistent and predictable) and it should be intuitively obvious that a comic story or movie's "newness" depends on the individual. The dull, trite and predictable for someone reading all available comics for 20 years is vastly different from someone who has been reading comics only a few months. The reviewers of any medium, purely by their heavy consumption of its offerings, will tend to have greater demands for originality and are always searching for the different and innovative. Unfortunately, the majority of Americans tend to prefer being able to "predict" they will enjoy something based on what was enjoyable in the past. Formulas and cliches will "sell" until they are thoroughly worn out.

To the reviewer's viewpoint, the greatest condemnation of comics' future might be in the interview with Steve Englehart (*Comic Times* #2): because of corporate fear of trying anything that might fail, nothing really new is tried. This is a problem throughout all aspects of modern American culture: by 1980-'81, very few are the new TV shows that are not spin-offs or attempts to duplicate other successful shows; every successful movie has its sequel; and after looking over She-Hulk and Spider-Woman, can Gamma the Hulk-Dog and the Legion of Spider Heroes be far off? In criticizing trite trends, the reviewer should keep in mind that it is not "bad," just boring.

Evaluating an effort's "realism" presents a much greater problem. It is not synonymous with "life-like", but rather, refers to the comic's (or movie's or whatever's) ability to convey the story in a sense with which the audience can identify. Clearly, this is interwoven with originality, and it is also influenced by the background perspectives, ideals, and frames of reference of the audience. Realism covers the area most difficult for reviewers to meaningfully discuss and it is the area in which different people are most likely to disagree. There are so many variables involved. Comic fans oft prefer movies be "true" to their print counterparts. Some items might be so unrealistic that they detract from all other elements of the story, as with the hard-core science-fiction fans who abhor *Star Wars* loud explosions in the midst of an outer space vacuum. Others simply ask, "Would I act like that?"

In other words, realism refers to audience empathy. This might be difficult for some to realize, but not everyone thinks alike, and by their very prediliction for heavy consumption and analysis of popular art forms, reviewers tend to be slightly different from other members of the medium audience. This is why many critically acclaimed works are commercial failures and many popular works are almost universally panned. This is not to say the reviewers' tastes are "better," just different. They *might* be more demanding, but it is only because reviewers are members of an "expert" audience, looking over more of the available offerings than most people,and dissecting what they see. A reviewer, a critic, can never be taken as a typical audience member. In fact, a "typical" audience member might not even exist; different people might like the same things for greatly different reasons.

In a sense, to write or create for reviews is to court financial disaster. This is not to say that the oft-implied quality vs. saleability dichotomy is valid, but that the reviewer's tastes are not necessarily those of a large potential audience. A work must sustain a feeling of originality and realism with a substantial audience or it will fail. Total abstract jazz bores many people, seemingly being played for other musicians; *Silver Surfer* had sales problems possibly (in part) because it was increasingly geared towards the writers of letters of praise and rave reviews, losing touch with most comic readers. Maybe the sales system of our popular culture discourages experimentation, but a critical success can be innovative and different such as is seen in the TV shows *M*A*S*H* or "All in the Family." In fact, without innovation and change, eventual failure is guaranteed as the repetitive themes wear out. Unfortunately, in the short run, many prefer to "play it safe."

Anyone who pleads that the role of criticism is to "raise the level" of a medium has their nose in the air and a cranium of cottage cheese. To point out trite plotting, vapid drawing, and unrealistic characterizations should be more journalistic than evangelical. The reviewer's tastes are no better than the next person, and the critics role is not so much to proclaim what is good or bad, but what they like *and why*. The goal is insight, for both popular culture creators and their audiences, not for giving letter grades. ■

BLOWTORCH
III
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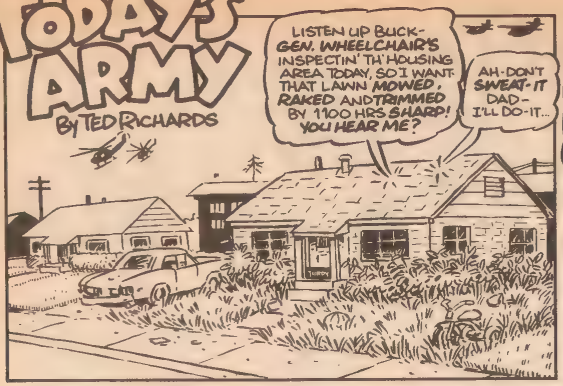
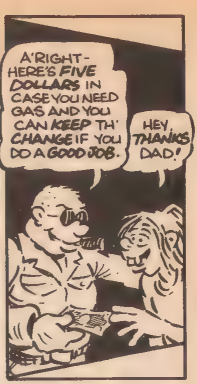
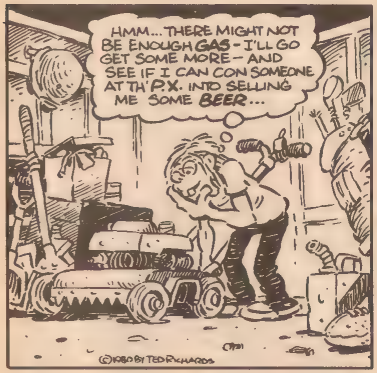
YAAA!
HEY, WILL YOU QUIT SNEAKING UP ON ME LIKE THAT?
TAKE IT EASY, BLOWTORCH!
Murad
IT WAS THE DAME WHO HIRED ME FOR THIS JOB- WHAT WAS SHE DOING HERE? FOR PETE'S SAKE, I KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT HER... LIKE, WHY DOES SHE WANT ME TO PROTECT WEEDE? DOES SHE PREFER PERRIER TO SPRING WATER? ALSO, WHAT'S HER NAME? SHOULD I CALL HER "THE LADY IN RED"? NAAH, SHE'S WEARING WHITE. WHAT SHOULD I CALL HER? "LADY X"? "SALLY"? A CAB?
I SEE YOU GOT YOURSELF HIRED TO WATCH OUT FOR WEEPE... I'M SURE HIS WIFE AND HER LOVER ARE PLOTTING TO MURDER HIM. WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE CASE SO FAR?
200 DOLLARS A DAY PLUS EXPENSES!
HE'S ASLEEP! NOW'S YOUR CHANCE, BOUNCER! SUCK THE BREATH OUT OF THE WORM!
JUST LEAVE IT TO ME, BABE!
WATCH OUT, MR. WEEDE!
LUCKILY, "LADY X" PULLED ANOTHER VANISHING ACT AND I CAUGHT BOUNCER FROM HURTING THE OLD MAN... JUST IN TIME! BUT HOW AM I GONNA PREVENT HIM FROM HURTING ME? HMM... A BODYGUARD MAY COME IN HANDY!
SAY, AREN'T YOU WEEDE'S BODYGUARD? I DON'T KNOW IF I LIKE YOUR METHODS BUT I MIGHT NEED A BODYGUARD, SO I WAS THINKING...
AFTER I'M THROUGH WITH YOU, YOU AIN'T GONNA NEED NOTHIN'!
UHHH!
I'LL GO AFTER WEEDE, SWEET-PLUM. WE CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY!
Y-YOU MEAN YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE ME ALONE WITH HIM?
I HAD TO DO SOMETHING- COULDN'T LET THAT GORILLA MAKE MASHED POTATOES OUT OF ME! ALSO, I COULD NOT LET VOGUE CATCH UP TO WEEDE — IT WAS MY JOB TO PROTECT HIM! SO THERE WAS ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO DO... GET THE HELL AWAY!! BUT SINCE I COULDN'T DO THAT...
ONE STEP AND I BREAK YOUR GIRLFRIEND'S ARM!
YEEOWW!
ZONK
LOOK, LOVER... OUR WORK WAS DONE FOR US! WEEDE TRIPPED AND BROKE HIS NECK!
YA KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS, BLOWTORCH?
HOUSEHOLD ACCIDENTS REALLY DO CONSTITUTE MORE DEATHS PER YEAR?
NOT EXACTLY, HANDSOME. IT MEANS BOUNCER AND I ARE FREE TO BE MARRIED. NOW THEN... HOW DO WE DISPOSE OF YOU?
LISTEN, VOGUE- ANYTHING HAPPENS TO ME AND A CERTAIN LETTER WILL FIND ITS WAY TO THE POLICE!
IF YOU'RE DEAD, WHO'S GONNA SEND THE LETTER, STUPID?
UH... GEE! I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT! BUT YOU GOTTA ADMIT, IT MAKES A GREAT COUNTER-THREAT! HEH-HEH!

TODAY'S ARMY

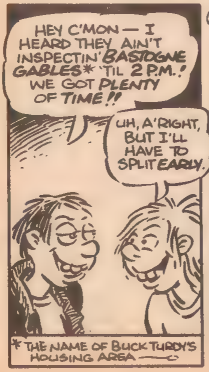
By TED RICHARDS

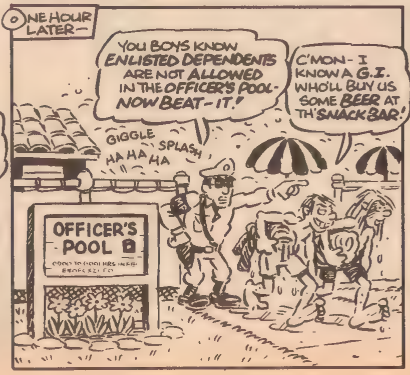

LISTEN UP BUCK- GEN. WHEELCHAIR'S INSPECTIN' TH' HOUSING AREA TODAY, SO I WANT THAT LAWN MOWED, RAKED AND TRIMMED BY 1100 HRS. SHARP! YOU HEAR ME?
AH-DON'T SWEAT-IT DAD- I'LL DO-IT...



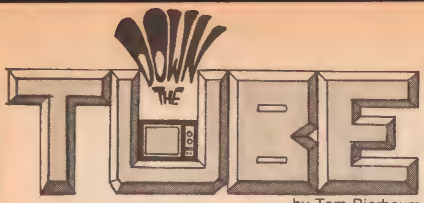

HMM... THERE MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH GAS - I'LL GO GET SOME MORE - AND SEE IF I CAN CON SOMEONE AT TH' P.X. INTO SELLING ME SOME BEER...
©KELLY BY TED RICHARDS

HEY BUCK-WANNA GO SEE IF WE CAN CRASH TH' OFFICER'S POOL? JANIE WHEELCHAIR'S* HAVIN' AN ALL DAY POOL PARTY!
AW NAW- I GOTTA CUT TH' LAWN BEFORE 11 O'CLOCK OR MY OL' MAN'S GONNA KILL ME....
* GENERAL WHEELCHAIR'S DAUGHTER


HEY C'MON — I HEARD THEY AIN'T INSPECTIN' BASTOGNE GABLES* 'TIL 2 P.M.! WE GOT PLENTY OF TIME!!
UH, A'RIGHT, BUT I'LL HAVE TO SPLIT EARLY.
* THE NAME OF BUCK TURDY'S HOUSING AREA


ONE HOUR LATER—
YOU BOYS KNOW ENLISTED DEPENDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN THE OFFICER'S POOL- NOW BEAT-IT!
C'MON- I KNOW A G.I. WHO'LL BUY US SOME BEER AT TH' SNACK BAR!
GIGGLE HA HA HA
SPLASH
OFFICER'S POOL

HUH! I KNEW IT! HE HASN'T TOUCHED ONE ☆◎# BLADE OF GRASS!!
THIS IS TH' LAST ◎%!# STRAW! I'M SHIPPIN' THAT #%◎ PUNK OFF TO A MILITARY ACADEMY!
SLASH
SLASH
BRRRAA
WHACK HACK CHOP
WHAT TH'- STOP! STOP THIS VEHICLE!!
BROOM
SGT. TURDY, I'M ANXIOUS TO HEAR AN EXPLA----
OH NO! THAT'S TH' GENERAL'S JEEP!!!
CONFOUND IT! I NEVER THOUGHT I'D EARN MY PURPLE HEART INSPECTING LAWNS!!
I'VE GOT A DEPENDENT ON TH' LINE WHO CLAIMS HIS "OLD MAN" IS ON THE FRONT STEPS WITH A MACHETE!
SOUNDS LIKE ANOTHER "LAWN INSPECTION CRISIS"...
CRISIS SEC
FAMILY SERVICES



Graphic by Andre Gordon

by Tom Bierbaum

We need Carl Sagan.

In this era of ecological apathy, when trees are called polluters; when opposition to nuclear power is branded a radical cause; when globe-shattering weapons are regarded as safeguards, not threats; when economic and ecological concerns are thought to be mutually exclusive; in this era of ecological apathy, Carl Sagan's television series *Cosmos* is here to remind us of the fragile balance of life that has evolved over billions of years. Man now has gained the power to destroy that balance and himself, Sagan tells us.

In this era of emotionalism, when scientists are regarded as egg-headed intellectuals; when it's suggested that the Biblical tale of creation be given as much attention in schools as the theory of evolution; Sagan's *Cosmos* is here to tell us evolution is a fact. And he gives examples from history of how man's learning to trust science and reject emotionalism has been necessary to bring about the modern world.

In this era of prejudice, when Iranians don't deserve civil liberties; when Vietnamese immigrants are greeted with distrust and hostility; when integrating all-black schools has become too risky because we can't bear the thought of well-to-do children attending the forsaken ghetto schools; in this era of prejudice, Sagan's *Cosmos* is here to remind us of the uniqueness of the human being, and of the common heritage all social groups share.

In this era of the "Me Generation," when pompous hedonists assert their way across the toes of their fellow man, labeling themselves "Number One," Sagan's *Cosmos* reminds us we are mere specks in a universe where suffering is as much a part of living as is pleasure.

The problems of the '80s continue to close in on our culture, producing more and more fear, and more and more reluctance to use the tools of knowledge, science and cooperation. But Sagan reminds us that it was those tools that brought us out of the primitive ages, and that it is only those tools that can keep us here.

Yes, we need Carl Sagan.

Unfortunately, Carl Sagan needs a narrator.

For all the wisdom Sagan's series encompasses, the shows are often tiresome and laughable, because he narrates with a sing-songy, paternalistic voice that tries too hard to tell us we should be impressed by what he's saying.

Cosmos presents Sagan's "personal journey" through the universe, around the planet and inside the molecules of living beings. It's his attempt to explain man's place in the cosmos.

The 13 week series was produced for public television at a reported cost of $10 million. You'd think they could use that cash to find a way to visually impress (indeed, they have), but Sagan tries to outdo the visuals with a solemn narration that more often seems to parody rather than complement the special effects.

The man is noted as a brilliant lecturer (his on-location ad-libbed comments are quite satisfactory) and writer, but he doesn't have the speaking voice to read what he's written.

The opening episode stumbled out of the blocks with an interminable 30-minute tour of the galaxy marred by Sagan's continual gushing. By the end of the journey, it became difficult to imagine him performing even the most mundane tasks without interpreting them as "beacons" that signal the "life-music of the galaxy."

Take, for example, a trip to take out the garbage, as it might be narrated by Sagan's enthusiastic, slurring voice:

"The stuff must be everywhere in this garbage . . .this trash . . .this rrrubbish. As I grasp it in my hand, I can only now beginnn to appreciate the grandeur of these remnants of last night's ravioli, with its mmmillion billion little proteins and nucleic acids. In this is the music of life.

"The next step in this hyooman journey takes us plunnnging through the back door, a disquieting and awesome prospect. Beyond the threshold is that great dark, that iiin-between universe called the back yard. How loonely the immense void between here and the garbage cans.

"At the end of this grandiose journey, I discover the cans have been overturned by some biological machine, some beeeing, some four-legged vandal . . .some dog. And it is here that our journey must end, for I am not about to pick up this collection of the stuff of life, whose surfacezzz are very likely covered with organic matter."

Other than Sagan's over-dramatic narration, the show's early episodes have proved to be entertaining and enlightening. They've resourcefully found ways to make the nearly unfathomable realities of the universe a fascination for viewers.

For example, Sagan's "cosmic calendar" reduces the seemingly infinite history of the universe to a comprehensible scale by projecting it onto a single calendar year. When we see that in the 365 day life of the universe, the planet has only been around for a few months, and recorded history for a few minutes, we can finally appreciate the cameo nature of man's appearance in the cosmos.

As another example, Sagan pulverizes our reasoning faith in horoscopes by observing the minuscule influence the planets exert over our lives. Their greatest physical effect is gravity. But though the position of the planets at an individual's birth is supposed to significantly influence his fate, Sagan points out that each planet exerts less gravitational pull on the infant than does its obstetrician.

But perhaps the finest moment of the early episodes was when Sagan demonstrated why Darwin's "theories" are no longer considered theories.

As one segment of that explanation, he showed how human selection has created an Oriental crab that has the face of a Samurai warrior on its shell.

Over thousands of years, man's reluctance to eat crabs that have shapes similar to human faces on their shells allowed these crabs to survive and reproduce themselves and their distinctive shell designs. When some of the shells started coming out looking like they had the faces of Samurai warriors on them, the crabs were almost deified in Japanese waters. The result? Almost none of them were eaten, and many lived to reproduce themselves.

Sagan concluded the story with the moral: if human selection can make such a big difference in a few thousand years, imagine what natural selection—the collective force of the planet—can do given eons.

Then he lent credence to what may have looked like an incomplete case by carefully mapping the development of life from the most primitive specks of biological matter all the way through time to the development of the human being. This evolution was illustrated with a cartoon that demonstrated just how specific science's view of the history of life has become.

Other episodes have been less enlightening. One spent nearly its entire hour following the life of astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler. At the program's close, Sagan failed to give a clear explanation of why Kepler's work made much difference.

There are a couple other minor flaws to the show. There's the weekly set of "cosmic credits" that fill the screen for minutes. They make *Cosmos* the "Superman-the-Movie-of-television." (If you look hard enough at those credits, you'll find a position called "astronomical artist." I guess if most of the show's steep budget was spent on special effects, their artist was astronomical indeed.)

The "this-show-is-made-possible" plugs have been worked right into the program's opening and closing segments. I find this an unpleasant concession to the oil company that helped foot the production costs.

But I can overlook these minor annoyances. I've even learned not to giggle during Sagan's paternalistic narrations. Despite the faults, *Cosmos* is an important series.

It has knowledge that should be shared. America should hear what Sagan is telling us.

Our anti-ecology, emotional, prejudiced, self-centered world needs the wisdom of Carl Sagan. ■

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BOOKS

BY DOUG MURRAY

Books
by Doug Murray

Now that everybody in the US has seen *Shogun*, the TV movie, and all of those literate enough to read *Shogun*, the book, have again made it a best-seller; it's time someone did something for those poor clods who only look at pictures.

The Making of Shogun (Delta, $8.95) is another in those "Scrapbook" sort of things done by companies that have lots of swell visuals but very little else to make a book with. *Making of Shogun* is one of the better examples of the type. Done in the large (8½ x 11) format, the book is attractively put together and is capped by a nice color cover of Richard Chamberlain and his lady fair from the film. It features numerous pages of color stills from the movie, interspersed with some behind the scenes information and interesting character sketches (done in watercolor by the producers to aid casting).

Although the book is probably not worth the price, as it has very little real text, it is a nice buy for those completists who want 'everything' on *Shogun*. It's also a nice companion piece for those crazies who video-taped the entire twelve hours. Make up your mind on this one . . .

★ ★ ★

Stephen King has made a fortune scaring people. His brillant *Carrie* and *Salem's Lot* have transfixed millions of readers, and have been translated into rather interesting films. *The Shining* may be his best, most frightening work of all, despite the shoddy movie that Stanley Kubrick made under that title.

The Fire Starter, his latest book, is not quite of the same caliber.

King's other recent book, *The Dead Zone*, and the *Fire Starter* have a common problem: they take an awful long time to get started. *The Dead Zone* literally goes on for hundreds of pages before we have any real inkling of what is going on. *The Stand* and *The Shining*, though better books, also suffer from this problem. What saves them is their fast-paced, satisfying conclusions.

In *The Fire Starter*, King returns to some of the ideas that formed *Carrie*. The young girl who is the "Fire starter" of the title has certain (basically unstated) mental powers, powers which have an unpleasant side effect: they start fires.

Naturally, such a thing cannot be hidden for long, and, sure enough, the government descends upon the girl's family to move her to 'a safe place' and train her to use her powers. Sounds like *The Fury*, doesn't it? Well, in any case, nothing special happens for another two hundred pages or so, until we reach the mandatory denouement where all hell breaks loose and, of course, the godly win again.

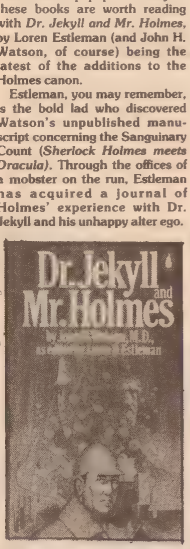
Despite all this, it's a pretty good book. King is such an accomplished manipulator that he can tingle a spine with the most innocuous happenings. When he really turns it on, you reach for the lights.

The Fire Starter is a book that bears reading. But I hope that Stephen King will learn that books start with page 1, not page 225.

★ ★ ★

If *Shogun* is the short time fad of the year, the longest literary fad is Sherlock Holmes. In the last few years, so many "new" Holmes stories have surfaced that Dr. Watson's "battered dispatch box" must be the size of St. Paul's Cathedral to hold all that "foolscap paper." Many of these books are worth reading with *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Holmes*, by Loren Estleman (and John H. Watson, of course) being the latest of the additions to the Holmes canon.

Estleman, you may remember, is the bold lad who discovered Watson's unpublished manuscript concerning the Sanguinary Count (*Sherlock Holmes meets Dracula*). Through the offices of a mobster on the run, Estleman has acquired a journal of Holmes' experience with Dr. Jekyll and his unhappy alter ego.



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Like the *Case of the Sanguinary Count, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Holmes* is fun reading and fits into the original Holmes stories with surprising ease. Estleman seems quite comfortable in the personna of Dr. Watson. He only slips with a few story anachronisms in this reconstruction of the chronicler's work.

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Holmes has all the touches that make the Holmes stories worth reading. It combines a touch of mystery, some dark adventure, and the brillant deductive ratiocinations of that most famous of all consulting detectives. Indeed, the only major complaint that I have about this book is the lengthy, and totally un-Holmesean, chase scene. Chase scenes with their accompanying pratfalls, are the work of our century, not Victorian London. Perhaps Mr. Estleman is thinking of movie rights. Ah well, it's a fine tale and worth both the telling and the reading. (Penguin, $1.95)

★ ★ ★

Watson's Choice is still another new novel that, at first glance, appears to be out of that famous "dispatch box." But, on closer scrutiny it is actually a rather well written British murder-mystery.

With a very stiff upper lip, the story concerns one Mrs. Bradley, an elderly psychologist, who, with her secretary Laura, and Laura's fiance, John Gavin of Scotland Yard, attend a "Sherlock Holmes Anniversary Party" at the home of Sir Bohun Chantrey. At the party, they encounter a mysterious, unexplained visitation by the Hound of the Baskervilles, and become involved in the murder of Sir Bohuns fiancée.

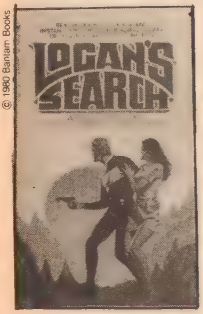
It's all rather good, rather British, rather understated. The mystery itself has a very Holmesian flavor to it. *Watson's Choice* by Gladys Mitchell, is a nice piece of work, and one I would recommend to Mystery aficianados.(David Mckay, $5.95).

★ ★ ★

Logan's Search, by Willam F. Nolan (Bantam, $1.95), is the last book in the Logan trilogy. People who are not familiar with Nolan's novel *Logan's Run*, but only with the tacky movie of the

same name, will be surprised to learn that there really was something more to write about. Although *Logan's Run* was a well-written adventure novel, it was also a fine satire on our youth-oriented culture. The novel took that mindset to its furthest limits; everyone dies at 21. The true thrust of the novel was that, if everyone must die at 21, we would want whatever momentary pleasure we could find. Art, music and culture in general would take too much time and effort to have any importance in this throwaway society.

In *Logan's Run*, Ballard (the legendary "old" man) helps Logan escape with his beloved Jessica to "Sanctuary", the forgotten human colonies on Mars. From there the escapees manage to destroy the computers that control the entire earth. In the second book of the trilogy (*Logan's World*) Logan and Jessica, who are now married, return to the new earth and attempt to build a new life. But a group of people who still live for pleasure, (called marauders) attack the family. Logan's son, Jaq, is killed, and Jessica is kidnapped. Logan is forced to once again become a hunter of men to get her back.



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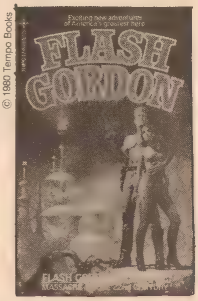
In *Logan's Search*, Logan is taken from his restored (and again pregnant) Jessica by aliens. The aliens send him to an alternate earth to again be instrumental in the destruction of a youth-oriented society.

He meets the Jessica of that world and falls in love with her. He penetrates the ranks of DS (a sandman once again), and participates in God Birth—the ultimate ceremony which leads to Godhead on this world.

However Logan fights back and through his efforts, DS and the computers are destroyed one more time. The forces of right triumph again, with a catch.

Nolan, a fine writer, has done an odd thing here. Despite all of his preaching against violence and killing, and his attack on the youth-society, the society of *Logan's Search* is a mirror image of that in *Logan's Run* and is as seductively attractive. The killing, running and pleasure-seeking are more interesting, and more meaningful, than the so-called better world that Logan has built for himself. The fact that Nolan has felt the need to go back to the Sandman-and-Runner storyline seems to indicate that this is where the sales are. Although a well-written and thoroughly enjoyable adventure story, *Logan's Search* is proof again that violence and death are more attractive than the benefits of hard work. This is another example of a writer telling us to do as he says, not as he does.

★ ★ ★



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As some of you readers might know, I'm a bit prejudiced when it comes to the character of Flash Gordon. I grew up with the serials on TV, and one of my first major projects was a fanzine called *Heritage*, which was all about Flash and his friends. Naturally, I'm always interested in new books about the character. But, *Flash Gordon Book One (Massacre in the 22nd Century)* (Tempo, $2.25) isn't really about Flash Gordon, despite the title and the names of the characters.

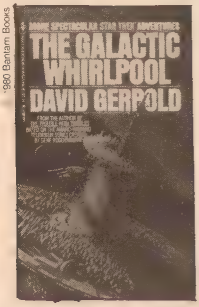
Flash Gordon Book One is set in the *22nd* century. Colonel Gordon of the CID, with his old friend, Dr. Zarkov (who is over 80 years old) and Zarkov's niece Dale Arden, becomes involved with a space ark that has suddenly appeared in Earth's skies. Flash, Dale, and Zarkov board the ark and are promptly whisked away to a strange world filled with a mix of primitive monsters and sophisticated machinery.

Although this story is not at all faithful to the original *Flash Gordon*, it is well written. (although no author is credited). The cover is a rather nice Boris Vallejo painting with a John Kennedy look-alike and the usual stunning woman. If you're an SF adventure fan, buy it. If you're a die-hard Flash Gordon fan, avoid it.

★ ★ ★

On the brighter side, David Gerrold's *The Galactic Whirlpool*, (Bantam, $2.25) is the best new *Star Trek* novel I've read yet. Gerrold, as you probably know, wrote the *Star Trek* episode *The Trouble with Tribbles* and is a *Star Trek* expert.

In *The Galactic Whirlpool*, the Enterprise discovers a huge star ship who's inhabitants have been out of touch with the outside universe for 200 years. Kirk and his officers realize the need to board and attempt to communicate



© 1980 Bantam Books

with the star ship's crew.

But boarding the ship and communicating with the inhabitants is a major problem. Culture shock does not begin to describe what happens to people who don't believe in the existence of a world outside their star ship city. Kirk, and Lt. Kevin Riley (a personal favorite of mine from the TV series) must make contact and convince the natives that they're not demons.

Gerrold has a masterful control of the *Star Trek* characters. His humanization of Kirk makes this book a delight to read. Add to that the presence of Riley and Specks (a precocious librarian), and you have a story to be cherished. Definately recommended.

★ ★ ★

Speaking of *Star Trek*, George Takei has written a novel in corroboration with Robert Asprin. *Mirror Friend, Mirror Foe* (Playboy Press, $1.95), is an old swashbuckling novel set in the future. The main character, Mosato (strikingly similar to a certain starship helmsman), is a duellist, a saboteur and a Ninja. In this adventure (the first of a projected series) Hosato and his robot companion infiltrate and destroy a robot-manufacturing complex, with near-disastorous results.

The personna of Hosato is so engaging, that one finds oneself wishing the book would not end. I would highly recommend this one too, along with its upcoming sequel *Mirror Nemisis*. Takei is more than just another pretty face.

★ ★ ★

© 1980 Playboy Press

Do you remember a 1940's Boris Karloff film, *The Devil Commands*? It was the one in which Karloff, with the aid of some strange machines, attempted to pierce the spirit barrier and talk with his dead wife. Naturally, things went wrong, and Karloff ended up paying the supreme price for meddling with things "Man was not meant... etc., etc.". That film was based on a novel called *Edge of Running Water*. The hardcover first edition of that novel, published in 1939, has become quite a collector's item.

Ballantine has just reprinted William Sloane's *Edge of Running Water* in paperback ($2.25). Even if you're not interested in it because of its value as a collector's item, pick it up to read. It's a nicely done story about communication with the dead. Besides, if it sells well, Ballantine may be encouraged to reprint more of the old out-of-print classics. At least one can always hope so.

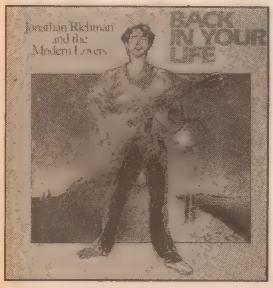
That about covers it for this month. See you next time with more advice on what to read, and what to leave. ■

Illustration by Reg Wells

by Ed Kronsbein

Ten years ago I called it *Rock*, like everyone did. It was like an island where righteous forces were gathered, prior to taking over the world for peace. Today that steadfast Rock, foundation of a time and an ideal, is no more. It's no longer a noun, something that can be held. It's a verb again. It's shaking, moving, changing, every minute. The rock's rolling again. And as seriously as I regard it I can't stop to redefine, or aggrandize, or it'll get away.

This is the first of regular progress reports, as I go chasing the rock. I'll try to keep up, while never forgetting where it's been. With any luck I'll be able to predict some of its future course. Join me.



ALBUMS WITH PERSONALITIES

Let's go out into the clover now. Here we are, up in Maine, with the grass growing. Strange things happen in Maine. Monsters party in the woods. A mosquito sings while it bites, explaining to its victim that, after all, God made "little mosquitoes" too. Believe it or not, Stephen King has nothing to do with this this. This part of the state has only one inhabitant. Jonathan Richman is his name.

Richman's Maine is, literally, a state of mind. Nature and man haven't heard of original sin there yet. They're still part of the same whole. Even the monsters promise not to dirty the woods. There's room for everyone: Abdul courts Cleopatra near the same town where Emaline marries her young man on a Sunday morning.

Richman's most recent album, *Back in Your Life* (Beserkley), is a prime sample of an artist with a personal vision. I cite him first because Richman's vision is perhaps the most unique I've ever encountered (barring parodists like Martin Mull, Frank Zappa, etc.). In fact one is tempted to question his motives at first. His voice quavers, cracks, as he sings his unusual lyrics. Often he seems to forget the words, or makes up new ones, while his band, The Modern Lovers, moves the song along until he decides to rejoin it. But the deliberateness of this approach is obvious as you see where he's going.

Richman's is indeed a world where original sin never happened. Everything is innocent. But it seems things may change if he isn't careful. He admits himself that even he was not always like this, in "Affection": *I used to starve for affection|I blamed the world, and it could be the world's fault, I suppose|But I was a snob, the type who said I don't have time for them|And the type who says, I've got nothing in common with those.*

Which also gives you an idea of Richman's sinuous semi-improvised lyrics.

In the title song, featuring his roughest vocal and acoustic guitar, he warns that time's passing. The "you" in the song refers to a girl. As an album title it addresses everybody: he wants to be in all our lives again, returning our lost innocence. In the song he celebrates mundane things; a father going out for maple syrup, mother making the pancakes; ordinary experiences that are most extraordinary after they're lost. Once he almost pleads, "Gimme a break": the only time his optimism is unsure. Here he shows the effort it takes to appreciate simplicity.

Willful tentativeness like this is evident in Richman's style. It's a temptation to say he adapted his style to his message, though surely both evolved at once. The voice breaks and wavers like dreams do. To reinforce the message, to convince you, that voice repeats lines and provides outrageous sound effects. Ultimately, you are convinced.

There's not an unenjoyable track on this album. The best are the simplest: "My Love Is A Flower (Just Beginning To Bloom)"; the aforementioned "Affection"; and two Richman adaptations, "Emaline" and "Buzz Buzz Buzz." They celebrate love in a magic, some might say a corny, way. Richman's strength is that the world he postulates seems complete without cynicism. Probably because it's a world full of boys and girls, not men and women.

* * *

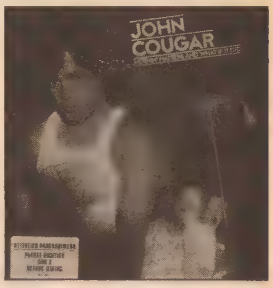
He might deny it, but Jonathan Richman's boyish sense of magic probably once infused John "Cougar" Mellencamp. Like most of us, "Cougar" had to grow up. And he changed. But he still remembers "innocent laughter."

John Cougar needs a shave. He's wearing an undershirt and staring, hand on hip. His album is titled *Nothin' Matters And What If It Did.* Answer back and he'd fight you. He'd probably kick the...well, you know. But Cougar's not as hard as he seems. Listen to his story.

On his second album on Riva Records John Mellencamp has constructed a remarkable portrait of a man in a quandary. On a "Hot Night In A Cold Town", "Johnny" leaves home on a *one-way trip.* His journey takes him from a forced attitude of callousness to his first encounter with real love, through rejection and his escape from emotion into the safety of his original attitude.

A good way to trace this whole circle is to listen to side two first, then side one, then two again. You can sample the "tougher" songs: "Tonight", (the second band) full of blue collar frustrations appeased by a girl's eager surrender to "the only boy that makes me feel like I'm alive"; "Wild Angel", in which the taunting singer reminds the girl of her "weakness" for him; and "Cheap Shot", a piece of bitchy bravado challenging the forces which are undermining "progressive music."

Side one begins hopefully with the abandonment of the *cold town*, and its trap of aimless motion: *in and out of doorways|Up and down the stairs*, and *stray dogs headed for the pound.* "Ain't Even Done With The Night" begins another amorous adventure, but he admits, *I don't know if I know what to do.*



"Don't Misunderstand Me" is the turning point. For the first time he is willing to explain himself. Further, to change: *I'm gonna break on through|Out of this mess.* And he does. "This Time" is the album's centerpiece, as well as the single. He admits he's no longer the same. He's really in love. He's found the *innocent laughter* that he's been searching for.

Then, the irony, the tragedy, really: "Make Me Feel" is a plaintive ballad to a woman who no longer cares. It seems all his work at changing was for naught. She doesn't want to *listen to his plans.*

Reprised, side two opens with a last reach for emotion. "M.G." is more than a childhood recollection now; it's a painful reminder. After this he's his old self. Don't remind him of the past, he'll only deny it. Don't look for concern in him: *Nothin' matters and what if it did.*

* * *

The name of the album is simply *Peter Gabriel* (Mercury), just like his first two records. He won't give anything away with titles. But the picture on the front cover of the man with the melting face makes expectations of some strange stuff inside. You might wonder how well murderous psychotics can express themselves on record.

You might be surprised. The "Intruder" of the first song seems to live inside a closet. The opening drum riff rumbles as though he were playing it from his hiding place. Creaking noises are next. A voice shrieks. Lower voices begin to mumble unintelligibly. When Gabriel's sibilant vocalizing commences his voice moves about speakers like a wraith. You can't quite catch it (If you care to; I didn't). Hissing alternates with wailing. The sparse lyrics evoke the look and smell and feel of a dark closet.

They build tension switching between the intruder's impressions and his vision of what will happen when he finally takes his victim.

I made the mistake of listening to this song at three in the morning.

Side one persists with two songs that could be flashbacks by this same intruder. It seems that each goes farther into the past. "No Self Control" and "I Don't Remember" employ eerie arrangements, particularly a sinister organ on the former. But they're not as creepy. And the singer of each sounds progressively saner.

"Family Snapshot" follows. A quiet tune and a soft vocal. A respite, you think, until you begin to listen. Could this have been the intruder's family, and his first episode of violence? "...And Through The Wire" which closes the side is obsessed with clocks and metronomes, things that measure and order. It ends with a line that's prophetic of a life to come: *we get so strange across the border.*

If there's such a thing as a "cinematic" songwriter I think that Gabriel would qualify. The economy of words yields a diversity of images, suggesting pictures. His melodies and arrangements, with sounds flying through the spaces between beats, and unexpected starts and stops, give an irresistable sense of motion. Side one of this album is the recorded equivalent of a horror movie. The man certainly lives up to his face.

But turn over the jacket and there's a picture of some other Peter Gabriel. A split personality? That would certainly fit with all the strangeness that's gone on. So flip over the record. Listen. What's wrong?

It's like Jekyll and Hyde, but Jekyll's rather an uninventive fellow. "Games Without Frontiers" sounds like something the Monkees did ("Zor and Zam" if you must know). Or it could've been Zager and Evans follow-up to "In the Year 2525." "Not One of Us" and "Lead a Normal Life" sound like rebuttals to side one, lacking atmosphere and wit. And "Biko" sounds like Harry Belafonte's comeback record.

While Jonathan Richman and John Cougar draw from life, Gabriel seeks to mold his personality on vinyl like a character actor. He has talent, as one side of this record attests, but his is a more difficult undertaking than the others. He needs solid preparation and rehearsal just like any actor. And he needs a good script. Much better than side two.

* * *

TWO LIVE ONES

Even more than studio work, live albums are enterprises bearing both risks and advantages. The advantages include some working time saved. Bands have to give concerts anyway—recording them can satisfy a new album commitment to a label, and spare the time that could be taken working up new material, practicing, and recording in the studio. A live album can be a 'greatest hits' (or 'best songs') package with something extra—the people who have all the old records might buy the new one just because it's live.

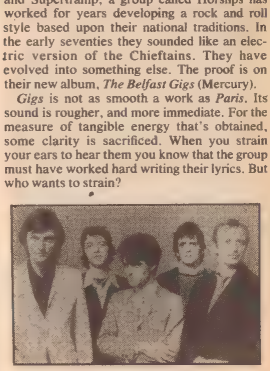
Naturally the greatest risk is the lack of control. If a voice is off or some chords botched, there are no retakes. Some artists record several concerts and take the best versions from each, but that's quite an expense. A live album requires even more technical expertise on the part of the engineers, mixers and producers. One problem historically with live albums was that the audience frequently drowned out the performers. The modern streamlined version mustn't allow this. Quality of sound is what is most important and most expensive.

To different degrees, new works by Supertramp and Horslips weigh advantages of the live approach successfully against the dangers. Supertramp's *Paris* (A&M), named for the location of the concert, is graced with high standards of both performance and sound. Producer/engineers Russel Pope and Peter Henderson, long-time associates of the band, captured nuance of vocals and instruments with pristine clarity. Admittedly, it took some thirty attempts before the band delivered a concert that equaled the standards it sought. But the effort was successful. One might forget that this was recorded and mixed on location, live, so controlled are all aspects. That may or may not be a shortcoming.

The material on hand is drawn from the last six years of the group's repertoire. Three songs from last year's number one *Breakfast In America* are included, the balance of material new to this listener, and perhaps to many other inexperienced ears. It's a sampler including ballards ("Two Of Us"), rockers ("Bloody Well Right"), and even some jazzy jamming ("Crime Of The Century"). Supertramp's inimitable sound (high-pitched vocals often matched with wailing clarinet or saxophone) is malleable enough for whatever style they attempt. But they're not imitators. They're not exactly innovators either, but the sound is fresh and personal. Here is a band who's worked for its own identity, achieved it, and kept on growing.

In Ireland, up the British Isles from England and Supertramp, a group called Horslips has worked for years developing a rock and roll style based upon their national traditions. In the early seventies they sounded like an electric version of the Chieftains. They have evolved into something else. The proof is on their new album, *The Belfast Gigs* (Mercury).

Gigs is not as smooth a work as *Paris*. Its sound is rougher, and more immediate. For the measure of tangible energy that's obtained, some clarity is sacrificed. When you strain your ears to hear them you know that the group must have worked hard writing their lyrics. But who wants to strain?



Again the material at hand provides a good overview of the group's repertoire. All of their four albums are represented, with the addition of concert staple "Shakin' All Over." Perhaps because they're on home ground, the early work (traditional melodies in a rock context, and lyrics based on the Irish experience) makes up the bulk of the performance. The best number, an instrumental called "King of the Fairies", mixes electric guitars with mandolin, flute and tin whistle. The worst song, "Dearg Doom", is a murky concept piece with slurred vocals and ill-mixed instruments. The rest of the material ranges from good ("Trouble With A Capital T", "Shakin' All Over") through fair ("The Warm Sweet Breath Of Love", "The Man Who Built America") to pedestrian ("The Power And The Glory", "Blindman", and "Guests Of The Nation").

Producer Steve Katz and engineer Ralph Moss don't deliver here as well as they have for Lou Reed and others. They offer one tantalizing glimpse of the band's potential ("King Of The Fairies" is worth the price of the album as far as I'm concerned), but obscure the rest in an approach that's a bit too naturalistic. Sure it's live, but it's a record too.

* * *

REVIEWS IN BRIEF

Special Things. Pleasure (Fantasy). Here's an aggregation devoted to its name. Party music full of popping horns, shivering guitars and atmospheric synthesizers. The lyrics are icebreakers good enough to lend courage to even the most inept swain. *The time is now to relate/ And let our bodies communicate* advises one "Yearnin' Burnin'" fellow. The tunes are rhythmic, danceable, and melodically various enough to appease this most vociferous disco hater.

Preacher Jack (Rounder). This compatriot of George Thorogood has gotten his chance for exposure outside the New England area at last. Comparisons are inevitable. Jack Lincoln Coughlin draws material from the same pool as Thorogood. But this is rockabilly piano playing and a different sound from Thorogood's electric guitar styling. Coughlin's voice carries him in a more country-oriented direction, shining on songs like "The Public Is My Family And Music Is My Life" and "Going To The River."

* * *

Tiddly Winks, NRBQ (Red Rooster Records). They used to be the National Rhythm and Blues Quartet. Maybe they switched to initials because rhythm and blues was too confining. This record contains a variety of music all in a very "pop" mode. Most of it is enjoyable if not striking. The soft ballad "Beverly" is a beautiful song. But though NRBQ's a group of good singers and strong musicians, I found no personality consistent through their chameleon-like versatility.

The Tigers (A&M). The so-called "new wave" has brought a lot of old sounds to the surface of contemporary music. This British band debuts with a collection of enjoyable, hook-filled songs reminiscent of the best of the English invasion of the mid-sixties. Excuse my bias, but that's my favorite time in rock and roll. Modern influences include the Cars (note the piping organ in "Promises Promises" and other songs) and Joe Jackson. "True Confessions" sounds so much like Elvis Costello that it could be a parody.

Almost every song here could be a single. Side one is particularly engaging. The best on the album: "Promises Promises", "Fall For You" and "Jack It Up."

* * *

Little Dreamer, Peter Green (Sail Records). This co-founder of Fleetwood Mac probably wouldn't recognize his once-bluesy former band today. He probably wouldn't listen long enough. Obscure lyrical exercises and experiments with sound-effects are not Green's particular interests. He's retained his influences and refined them. This record is full of "slowhand" guitar stylings on blues-rock compositions of quiet intensity. All are originals except for a cover of "Born Under A Bad Sign", which is probably the weakest thing on the album.

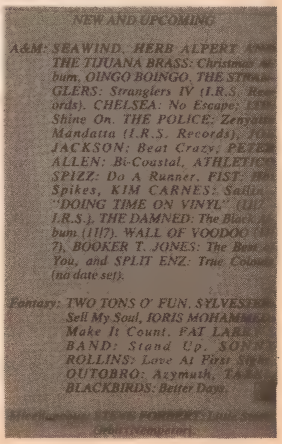
Green's rough baritone complements his guitar, and his band reinforces the sound like a single rhythm instrument. Understatement is the rule here. Feelings are *felt*, obviously, but the singer keeps control of himself, or maybe he's too inarticulate to express himself completely. Here's an almost uniform high quality, the highest in "Loser Two Times" and "Could Not Ask For More."

* * *

Night Flight, Justin Hayward (Deram). Former Moody Blue Hayward may not satisfy old fans with this effort, but he should find some new ones. That voice won't ever be disconnected from "Nights In White Satin" and other Blues staples. But using different composers here, including producer Jeff Wayne, Hayward can't help but achieve something new. The title song's horn intro leads into a story of more mundane experience. Hayward needs an airplane to fly now. Dreams alone won't do it.

Even the artist's own compositions rely more on rhythm instruments than on electronically-simulated flights of fancy. "Crazy Lovers" practically rocks and rolls. "Maybe It's Just Love" is a lovely, quiet, slow song, but the relationship it describes is definitely earthbound. One has to get to the second song on side two, "Suitcase", before finding something fit for the Moody's. Then that thoughtful ambience is broken by a cover of a Hall and Oates tune, "I'm Sorry." It's rather a rough awakening from a dream.

Hayward's made an album here that satisfies all his talents. He's not changed so much but maybe his older fans would disagree. He is growing as an artist and performer with the freedom of a solo career. It would be a shame to abandon him. ■


NEW AND UPCOMING
A&M: SEAWIND, HERB ALPERT AND THE TIJUANA BRASS: Christmas album, OINGO BOINGO, THE STRANGLERS: Stranglers IV (I.R.S. Records), CHELSEA: No Escape; LIVE: Shine On, THE POLICE: Zenyatta Mondatta (I.R.S. Records), JOE JACKSON: Beat Crazy, PETER ALLEN: Bi-Coastal, ATHLETIC SPIZZ: Do A Runner, FIST: The Spikes, KIM CARNES: Sailin', "DOING TIME ON VINYL" (I.R.S.), THE DAMNED: The Black Album (!!!?), WALL OF VOODOO (I.R.S.), BOOKER T. JONES: The Best Of You, and SPLIT ENZ: True Colours (no date set).
Fantasy: TWO TONS O' FUN, SYLVESTER: Sell My Soul, JORIS MOHAMMED: Make It Count, PAT LABARBERA BAND: Stand Up, SONNY ROLLINS: Love At First Sight, OUTOBRO: Azymuth, THE BLACKBIRDS: Better Days.

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CHATTING WITH

Jim Shooter

by David M. Singer

"My Plan Is To Make This Place Bigger Than Disney"

© 1980 Marvel Comics Group

DAVE: *At the ripe old age of 28, you have been writing comics, now, for most of the past fifteen years. What prompted you, at the age of thirteen, to decide to write a comic book?*

JIM: A desperate need for money. I mean, when you're a kid and you're 13 years old and your family needs money, and selling papers, delivering newspapers doesn't bring enough money in, what choices do you have? You can't get a job. So I had this crazy notion that somebody got paid for writing and drawing these comic books. It looked easy enough. So, I wrote a script, and I sent it in, and I got a nice letter telling me to send in another script. So I sent in two more, and I got paid for all three of those, and I got regular assignments from that point on. I was too dumb to know better, that it just couldn't be done, so I did it.

DAVE: *When you say that you needed money, are you talking in the sense that every kid wants to buy baseball cards, or did you mean your family needed . . .?*

JIM: I'm talking about paying the rent and eating regular meals.

DAVE: *Hard times.*

JIM: Yeah, stuff like that.

DAVE: *When you wrote the script, did you know what you were doing in the technical sense, or did you just put a story together, and they liked the story and later made it into a script?*

JIM: Well, basically, I was a crafty little kid. I'm pretty bright, and I'm pretty analytical. Since I was doing this with the express intention of selling my stories, I was very careful to observe what the "rules" were, and I analyzed and deduced what were the parameters of this process. I was also very crafty as to the feature I picked. I knew that I couldn't write *Spider-Man* as well as Stan Lee, but I found that the *Legion of Superheroes* was an incredible bore. So I wrote a *Legion of Superheroes* script, figuring, "Well I can do better than this one, but I can't do as well as that one. So I'll do this one." And that's why I chose *Legion of Superheroes*. Now what I wanted to do was revamp the whole thing. Throw out all the characters and start all over and really do whatever I wanted. And yet I knew they wouldn't buy that. So I played by their rules. I didn't change any of the characters' names. I didn't do anything radical. I just, I played it like, "Okay, I'll do one like they're doing only better, and then we'll see." And that worked out very well. And I think that one of the things that sold it for

me was that I evidenced some judgement in the things I did with that story. It wasn't a bad story.

DAVE: *Was it totally your idea to write the story, or did you talk with friends and they said . . .?*

JIM: No, this was just me. I was at least aware that it was pie in the sky enough that I didn't want everyone to know that I was going to make a fool of myself. [laughter]

DAVE: *You would only tell your friends that you were writing comic book stories if you were successful.*

JIM: Yeah, right.

DAVE: *About how long had you been reading comics at that point?*

JIM: Well, like most kids I had read comics when I was very young. I learned to read from comics. My mother used to read the comics to me and point at the words and then I learned to read. Before I was in school, I could read very well because my mother had pretty much taught me with the comics—*Donald Duck*, *Superman* and stuff like that. And I quit when I was 8 or 9, I guess, because I was getting bored with them. And I didn't really bother much with comics after that. Occasionally I would pick one up if a friend had it, or maybe I would buy one once a summer or something like that. But I really didn't bother with them much.

I was in the hospital, when I was 12 years old, for minor surgery. When you're a kid and you're in the hospital, on the children's ward, there's just tons of comics around. I was introduced to the new stuff that Stan Lee was doing which peaked my interest again. And so I was aware of them then. I would look at them occasionally. And I discovered, "Well, gee, I like *these*, while *those* are dull." And I started picking out the differences between why Stan's were good and why the other ones weren't. So when I got this idea to write one, I had pretty well done my homework on what was good and what wasn't.

DAVE: *If the Legion stories were boring, why were you reading them to know, "Hey, it's boring, I can do better"?*

JIM: Well, like I said, there were comics all around me for the short period of time I was in the hospital, and then I became aware of them again. And then I was doing it on a research basis. I wanted to know, "What were they doing here? How did they do this?" So I bought some *Legion of Superheroes* because I wanted to see what was going on. Also in those days, if you recall, they usually had these terrific Curt Swan covers that promised an incredible story. And then the story never delivered. And it was out of that frustration that I figured that this was the one I wanted to do, because I figured there must have been hundreds of thousands of little kiddies who would buy it on the basis of a Curt Swan cover, and who would be disappointed with the story inside. But one in particular that was boring was the one which had a cover where the Legion was having a civil war and Superboy and his group and these other guys and their group were flying against each other and I thought, "Wow!", expecting this knock-down, drag-out super battle. And what I got was really dull, they basically talked a lot and didn't do anything. Even when they did it wasn't really battling each other, it was kind of standing around.

DAVE: *You are referring to* Adventure *# 333, in which half the Legion supported Atlantis and the other half supported Krypton in a war over the colonization of ancient Earth?*

JIM: I guess, I don't remember it that clearly. All I remember was the cover was Superboy with all of his group and they're charging at the other guys. It was a great cover. And that's what they would do. They would do all these intriguing covers and then never pay off.

DAVE: *Is the hospital what put your family in a financial bind?*

JIM: No, as a matter of fact, I'm sure that was all paid for by my father's insurance. Times were tough and my father was a steel worker.

DAVE: *Then you're not from New York?*

JIM: No, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

DAVE: *So when you first started writing for DC you were constantly mailing in material from Pittsburgh?*

JIM: Yeah. I worked from Pittsburgh. I got my instructions over the phone from Mort Weisinger and through the mail. And he'd call me once a week. Sometimes more than that, but at least one a week. He'd always call me on Thursday nights, after the *Batman* TV show. And he'd ask me about that, since that was very important to him. I think he was the one who had arranged all that. And so he'd call me on Thursday nights and talk to me about whatever business we had. And I just kept up a constant flow of work. Every time I finished a story he had another one for me to start. And it worked out pretty well. We did that for almost five years.

DAVE: *Were you regarded by DC as an example of their audience? Did they try things on you because of your age?*

JIM: I don't know because the only person I dealt with was Mort. I know that he did ask me questions about the *Batman* TV show. I guess that he was interested in my reaction from an analytical standpoint. I always suspected it was just because it was another thing that he insisted on from his people. (Laughter) It was sort of a quiz to make sure I'd gone to school.

DAVE: *Bring up the ratings.*

JIM: Yeah. Maybe he figured that there was a Nielsen box in my set, I don't know. We did talk about comics occasionally, but I think Mort was a guy that liked power. He always wanted to tell you things, not to ask you things. Which worked out pretty well because he knew a lot of stuff. He'd been around a while, he was a very sharp guy and he knew a lot of things.

DAVE: *Were they paying you like they'd pay any writer, or were they treating you like a kid?*

JIM: Well, that's hard to say. The only source of information I had was Mort, obviously. I've never really done a great deal of research to see whether or not I was screwed. All I know is that when I sold my first story it ended up being for a little over $4 a page. And shortly thereafter, Mort doubled my rate with no explanation to me or anything like that.

I heard years later, and I have no way of knowing if it's true or anything like that, that one of the writers who I was competing with found out that I was not being paid well enough, and you know—here I am, this guy's competition—and he went into Mort's office and raised cain, and they ended up paying me a more reasonable rate. I got several more raises and by the time I got out of the business, I was making $14 a page. This was not great, but it was respectable in those days. Now, the trick is this: That's not a bad rate for script, but I was not only providing script, I was also providing script and complete pencil breakdowns.

DAVE: *You did the breakdowns?*

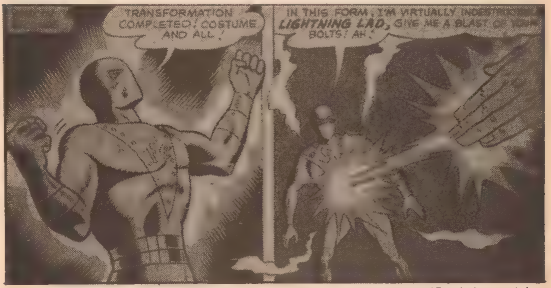
JIM: Oh yeah. You bet. I drew every single little picture. See, when I sent that very first script in, I had no idea what a script looked like. So I drew all the pictures, all the characters, wrote all the little balloons, the little captions in . . .

DAVE: *When you say draw, do you mean stick breakdowns or fully fleshed out panels?*

JIM: No, I draw pretty well, I'm not a professional, but I draw pretty well. I drew as complete as I could draw. I mean they were finished drawings. I put every brick in the wall and the whole thing. Now, Mort told me a couple of times that I really didn't have to get that complete. As a matter of fact, I got some letters from Curt Swan that he told me I could be a little simpler with the stuff. I didn't have to noodle it quite as much.

DAVE: *He didn't feel you were impinging in his area?*

JIM: Oh no! As a matter of fact, they were delighted. That was one of the things that Mort


TRANSFORMATION COMPLETED! COSTUME AND ALL.
IN THIS FORM, I'M VIRTUALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE! LIGHTNING LAD, GIVE ME A BLAST OF YOUR BOLTS! AH.
© 1980 DC Comics Inc

"In the story that I introduced Ferro Lad, I knew that the guy was going to die." The introduction of Ferro Lad is excerpted from Shooter's very first Legion story, **Adventure** 346

said was one of my selling points. That since I gave them pictures, they had visuals. I mean, let's face it, at the ripe age of 13 I didn't have the command of the language, I didn't have as strong a technical background, as most of the people I was competing with. What I really gave them was pictures. That was I gave them more visual stories, I think, than most of what they got. And it was also much better to get a story—even if it's crudely illustrated—that's illustrated, because then you can say, "Okay, this picture's wrong," and tell the artist to make a different one. You don't have to visualize and so its much easier to edit.

But for the most part they used everything I did. I have a splash page that Curt Swan was nice enough to give me, and it turned up in our warehouse. I don't know how it turned up in the Marvel warehouse but it did.

DAVE: *It's your artwork?*

JIM: No, he redrew it. But that's just it. I provided them on small paper, and then they would draw them. They drew the same pictures, except when Mort told them to do something a little different.

I also provided covers. And I did the cover suggestions in color. I would even color the covers. Mort felt that the cover was the most important part. So he would tell me, "Okay, make a splash page and a cover." and the splash page would be a symbolic splash all the time. He said to make both of them as if they were the cover. Then often what he would do is he would trade them. He would take my splash page and make it the cover, and take my cover and make it the splash page, if he felt it was better the other way around. So, I also designed the covers, and wrote the cover copy, and even provided a color rough of the cover for most of my books. Now, quite often, Mort would decide that neither of my covers was any good and have one of his own made. But more often than not, I did the covers as well and I was throwing in all these fringes for which I wasn't getting paid. I was getting paid for script writing.

DAVE: *When you were writing comics at 14, did you feel closer to the readers by virtue of being the same age as your audience?*

JIM: Recently I wrote a piece for Jack Harris at DC that hasn't seen print which talks about exactly that. I'm disappointed it's not in print because I'm real proud of that piece. I think that I had a unique situation. I was the same age as my audience, and also very close to the age of the characters that I was writing: the Legion of Super Heroes. The audience that I was writing for were my friends. It was an incredible synchronization, because my friends became my characters; my characters became my friends; I was my characters; my characters were my audience. Everything was just all together, it was weird. I think as a result of that, some good things occured in the stuff that I wrote and that I was very fortunate.

DAVE: *Could you write as fast as a teenager as you do now, or have done before you assumed this position?*

JIM: I'm actually a very fast writer. When I was a teenager, don't forget, I was going to high school. Every day I'd come home from school and I'd have to sit there and do pages because as soon as I finished one job I'd start on the next. Mort always wanted more from me than I could give him. So first of all you have to understand that I already sort of worked an eight hour day and I had homework and things like that—

DAVE: *Chores, I guess, as well.*

JIM: Oh, yes, sure, and I didn't have a whole heck of a lot of time to devote to it, and the second thing was that the pictures took a lot of writing time. I did more work than some of the writers in the industry today, who write as a full-time job.

DAVE: *Were you that good, or was DC that weak, that they had to take a 13-year-old kid?*

JIM: I just happened along at the right time in the right place. Mort had mostly older writers working for him, like Edmund Hamilton, and Leo Dorfman and I think he needed another writer. He just happened to be on the market for another writer. Basically there had been no new faces in comics for years and years and years when I came in. I was part of the first wave of new faces in comics. There was a 10-year gulf and then three people came into the industry. And they were: E. Nelson Bridwell, Roy Thomas and Jim Shooter. All of those people came into the industry through Mort Weisinger. Roy only lasted two weeks with Mort, but nonetheless, we all came in through Mort Weisinger. We were the first of the new wave. Shortly thereafter, Cary Bates showed up. Somewhere in there, Archie Goodwin did his first stuff.

". . .The difference between Mort Weisinger and Stan Lee was that Stan Lee had the best comics writer in the world writing for him, namely himself. . ."

We were the first new people in a long time. They couldn't get by with just the old people anymore, and they needed new people, so I just happened to be there at the right time. And it wasn't that they were booting people out to make room for me. It was that the guys were getting old and there weren't very many of them.

DAVE: *One of the big differences, right away, when you started the* Legion *series, was that you started emphasizing characterizations.*

JIM: Yeah.

DAVE: *. . .whereas, prior to that, the first two pages would be almost the same every issue. "We're a club. These are our members. These are our powers." It was as though they were meeting each other for the first time each issue. And it always seemed as though the dialogue was interchangeable among the characters.*

JIM: I agree. That's how I thought about it.

DAVE: *Did DC like this change, or was it that your stories overall were so good that they were stuck with your change?*

JIM: No, they liked it. See, a lot of people think that there was this huge difference between Mort Weisinger's approach, and Stan Lee's approach, to comics. You know, that Mort liked bad comics or something. Now I want to tell you something. I worked for Mort for five years, and I got endless lectures from him. And I've worked for Stan for almost five years now, and I've gotten endless lectures from him. And it's like deja vu, because sometimes in the very same words Stan will tell me the same things that Mort told me. Mort knew technically how to put a comic book together. So does Stan. Mort knew characterization and plot and action and the whole thing. From a technical standpoint, they are virtually interchangeable.

The difference between Mort Weisinger and Stan Lee was that Stan Lee had the best comics writer in the world writing for him, namely himself. And Mort had a bunch of kids and old guys who were really science fiction writers. Mort just didn't have the fire power that Stan had on the front lines there, and so, when I was providing some Stan Lee inspired characterization and stuff like that, it wasn't against Mort's wishes for sure. I mean, that's what he had wanted all along. As a matter of fact, he wanted a lot more of it, and a lot better than I could do, but I did the best I could. Their approaches were really not all that different.

Basically they both observed the fundamentals of good writing, and the fundamentals of good storytelling. They both approach comics cinematically. The other difference is that Mort aimed a little lower. He'd do a super pets story, and stories where the heroes would all turn into super babies and stuff like that. Because he was shooting just a little bit younger.

DAVE: *What do you feel is the basis of the appeal of the* Legion of Super Heroes*?*

JIM: I think that is a book that succeeded on concept. It's got a bunch of young heroes (which is an appealing concept), in the far future, with science fiction connotations and it has characters who were easy to understand; the youngest kid could figure them out. Yet there were enough things that you could do with those characters that it would keep some of the older readers interested. Maybe not as many as the *X-Men*, but a substantial number. I think that the fact that it was concept-strong enabled it to survive some bad writing and pretty average art.

DAVE: *Once you began writing the Legion, I noticed a greater experimentation with panel layout while you were breaking down the book. Was this a conscious effort on your part, or was this influenced by the editors?*

JIM: Frankly, it wasn't my fault at all. The panels that I laid out were always nice, square, regular panels. In those days it's no secret that the people at DC were just desperately trying to figure out why Stan Lee's comics were selling better than theirs, or were creeping up on them, actually. They tried everything.

If you look through my run of Legion comics, you can almost see the gears turning in Mort's mind. One time he tried strange panel arrangements because he saw that some Marvel books had strange panel arrangements. Another time they tried coloring in the gutters, because they thought it would look more colorful and brighter (it looked terrible). They were just desperately fishing around, trying to find some magic ingredient that would make it as popular as the Marvel books.

I think that's one of the reasons that Mort appreciated me, because I was obviously very influenced by the Marvel stuff. Not to denigrate his other writers, but being younger, I was a little more hip to the kind of things that

appealed to people my age. Some of these guys were superior writers, but I might have been a little more aware.

DAVE: *Were you able to adapt your stories to Bridwell's and Weisinger's plotting of the future history of the Legion? For instance they had decided who was going to die and who was going to marry . . .*

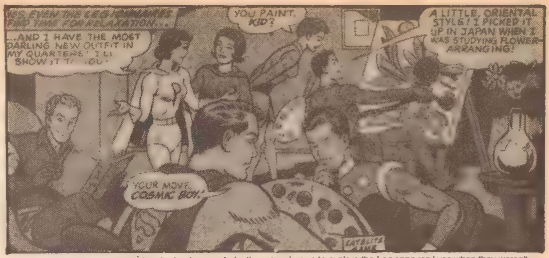
JIM: Actually when I started writing the Legion, it was unique. It was sort of a miniature Marvel universe. Basically I was the only writer, there were only 4 stories done by other people in my 4 or 5 years of work there. They didn't affect what I had done. In that little corner of the DC universe where I could govern everything, and I could keep everything consistent, I was a miniature Stan Lee guiding things along. So all by myself I had all of these plans about the futures of these characters, right from the beginning. I would be setting things up which Mort or the casual reader wouldn't realize, but that 6 issues down the road they would say, "Oh yeah he said something about that in issue . . ." whatever it was.

For instance in the story that I introduced Ferro Lad, I knew that the guy was going to die. I didn't know exactly how, but I created him to die. "Oh I know, I'll create a character who'll be a martyr." So I put him in there. His future was sealed on the day he was created.

I had been writing the *Legion* for 6 or 8 issues and Mort said, "OK write a story where the Legionnaires are all grownups; a future Legion story; the adult Legion." I thought about it and I said, "Gee, well then I've gotta know what's going to happen to all those guys." And he said, "Nelson will help you." So I don't know whether he and Nelson got together or it was just Nelson or what (Nelson would be a good guy to interview on that),,but he laid it out to me, "OK, these two will get married . . . they'll get married . . ." They pretty much gave me those kind of things. They didn't so much pick who would die as they decided who would get married. I think they told me some other things. I'm not sure now. At any rate they locked me into some stuff.

The only objection I had to it was that it was sort of the most obvious choices. They had all of the couples who were going together then, getting married later. No one had any girlfriend troubles, everything just came out like you figured. As a writer that bothered me somewhat. So I said, "Let me see what I can do with this." I muddled with that story for a long time. I did some stuff in that story which wasn't obvious at that time, but I set some stuff up that I thought was pretty good. For instance I had a statue of a dead character who wasn't even in the regular Legion yet. Night Woman . . .Shadow Woman . . .I don't know . . .

JIM: Whatever . . . .And a couple of issues later when I had a story where I could introduce a new character I introduced Shadow Lass. After she became a member, I had her interested in one of the guys. So she was interested in one guy for a while, then I had her going through two boyfriends, before she ended up with the guy she was really going to go with, which I think was Mon-El. That also related to something back in the adult Legion story because Mon-El had gone out into space because his wife had died or something like that . . .Aha! Shadow Lass, who had died. Okay well why'd he go into space? That doesn't make any sense, it sounds corney. Well the reason is that here's this guy who'd spent a thousand years in this shadowy, nebulous place where you are just sort of floating, conscious the whole time.



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After Jim Shooter began writing the Legion regularly, the series began to explore the Legionnaires lives when they weren't saving the universe. From **Adventure** 362.

A lot of people would say, "Well the Phantom Zone would be great, you could watch the world going on." But imagine, it's not like having a panoramic movie view of the world. Watching history unfolding minute by minute, hour by hour for a thousand years of a constant, sleepless myopic view of the world must be really dull. I mean this guy *has* to be on the verge.

So what does he do when he tentatively comes out into the world? I picture him as having a lot of trouble getting adjusted to life. "Oh yeah I can touch things, oh really. Wow!" Finally he gets very tentatively adjusted to the world, falls in love with a woman, they get close, she gets killed. Pffft. Back to the womb. (Laughter). Space man, it's just like the Phantom Zone out here. It's dull. Of course he would have to be alone, he would go back to the womb. The Phantom Zone experience would set him up for that beautifully. So I had all that in mind and I got to carry some of it out, but I didn't get to carry most of it out. But . . . . I was slowly unfolding these things and trying to make them more interesting than what I was stuck with.

For instance I had Clossal Boy being a bachelor and I had Shrinking Violet marry whoever the hell her obvious boyfriend was. My plan was that he would fall in love with this other guy and because of this unrequited love, he would go off alone and remain a bachelor. My intention was to slowly build a romance between Colossal Boy and Shrinking Violet over the years and then when she would finally marry this other guy, Colossal Boy would be heartbroken and remain a bachelor. I did have all this planned.

When I came back to the Legion, I tried to carry off some of this stuff. The problem was that I no longer had my own corner of the universe because I was sharing it with Cary [Bates]. Murray [Boltinoff] always liked to have more than one writer on the strip. So I would be trying to slowly build things, bring things along and establish characterizations and Cary was doing things that broke up my continuity and characterization that disagreed with mine. I'm not blaming him, I never had any control.

DAVE: *Was there any communication between the two of you?*

JIM: Oh no. I mean I suppose I could have, but in a way I felt kind of strange about walking in and getting half of Cary's book. Cary kept insisting that it was okay but I was real worried about that. Anyway I didn't have the control that I once had.

DAVE: *Why was the Legion moved from* Adventure *towards the end of your tenure?*

JIM: Well, it didn't have anything to do with the *Legion*'s sales. It had more to do with *Superboy*'s sales. The *Superboy* book was failing and I think they felt they were diluting the impact of Superboy by having him under two titles at once. The Legion was doing just fine at the time, but Superboy's own magazine was failing, so they tested having a couple of issues of the *Legion* without Superboy and it didn't do well. So they decided, "Well, we'll put Superboy in his own book and put Supergirl in *Adventure* and boot the Legion out, you know, figuring that Supergirl could carry the title. And, well, that worked out terribly. It didn't work out at all. They should have left it the way it was. So it wasn't my fault. We were doing okay. It was that stupid *Superboy* book that screwed it all up. [laughter].

THE MOMENT OF DECISION...
FINISH
WE BROKE THE TAPE SIMULTANEOUSLY, JUST AS WE PLANNED! SINCE NEITHER OF US WON, NONE OF THE GAMBLERS CAN COLLECT!
THE
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The final result of the very first Flash-Superman race, a story device introduced by Jim Shooter. From **Superman** 199

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The only Jim Shooter creation that was awarded his own book: Karate Kid. From **Adventure** 373.

DAVE: *As this new, innovative force, did you get to touch that many comics at DC?*

JIM: I touched a lot of comics at DC. I wrote every title that Mort Weisinger edited except *Lois Lane* and that was because I didn't want to write *Lois Lane*. I wrote *Superman*, *Superboy*, *Supergirl*, *Jimmy Olsen*, *Action Comics*, *Adventure Comics*, *Legion of Superheroes*, *World's Finest*, and *Captain Action*. I wrote the *Legion* pretty much from the day I started till the day I quit. I wrote all but four *Legion* stories. And in that period of time, I wrote a whole slew of *Superman* stories, a bunch of *Action* stories and *Jimmy Olsen*.

DAVE: *Were there political factions between the DC editors at that time over the use of talent?*

JIM: Well I only had contact with Mort. Once in a while I'd go up to the DC offices, and shake everyone's hand and say, "Yes, nice to meet you," but that was the only contact I ever had with them. Since I wasn't slated for other people, it was easy to believe what I'd heard, which was that each editor lorded over his own little company, kept his own little stable of people and guarded them jealously.

Once Mort asked me if I would like to try a story for Julie [Schwartz]. I said fine, so he told me to come up with a plot and a cover for the *Justice League*. So I did and I sent it to Mort. I didn't even send it to Julie. I wouldn't presume to send it to him because I had always dealt with Mort. Mort told me that it was no good and I accepted that and forgot about it. Sometime later there was a *Justice League* cover which looked a helluva lot like the one I submitted to Mort along with the story. [Laughter] It could have been a coincidence, but when I saw that cover I said [Postured indignation] "Wait a minute, that's my cover." It's the one where Superman is standing over a bunch of fallen Justice Leaguers saying something like, "Well I'm the toughest one."

Another example of that is *Captain Action*. Mort called me up and said, "Would you like to create a new hero, in his own comic book?" I said, "Great." Then he started telling me what had to be in it: the name has to be Captain Action, a drawing of his uniform would be sent to me, he has to have a pet panther, a kid sidekick, he gets his powers from mythological coins...By the time he read me this list of stuff that had to be in it, it was like a travelogue.

I was just trying to find a way to fit it all into seventeen pages, or whatever it was. Anyway I only wrote two of them, whereupon the book was turned over to Julie. I couldn't go with it because I was one of Mort's writers. So it went to someone else, even though I was the guy who had started the series. It wasn't even brought up whether or not I'd continue to do it.

When it was time for the third issue, I said to Mort, "Do you need another Captain Action plot?" and he said, "Oh no, Julie's working on that now." The subject wasn't even broached. It went to another editor and being one of Mort's writers, I couldn't touch it.

DAVE: *Why did you leave DC?*

JIM: Because Mort Weisinger, who was a great help to me and a fine editor, who gave me my start, and who I owe a lot, and on and on and on—was a tough guy to work for. He told me up front when he said, "Look, you're going to be a writer. I'm going to treat you exactly the same as I treat any of my writers. No quarter given because you're a kid." And he meant it. He was very rough on me.

DAVE: *I understand you had almost a psychological fear of the telephone.*

JIM: Oh yeah. When Mort had complaints, he delivered them in no uncertain terms. He was capable of being *harsh*.

He'd call me once a week for sure, and then he'd call me anytime he had anything to say. So very often it was more than once a week. So I got this weekly telephone call from this big important man from New York who would tear me to ribbons, talk about everything I'd done and point out its flaws. He was *tough* when he did this, he didn't mince words.

He sort of had a way about him, he'd put you down. That was the way you did it back then. I've heard alot of similar horror stories about other editors. It wasn't horrible from their point of view, it was just how you do it. I guess they pictured themselves as gruff foremen.

That's fine now, I can understand that intellectually. But when you're 15 years old and the executive vice-president, and head editor at DC comics; a big, important guy who could show you his name in *Who's Who*; when he calls you up to tell you that "You've done it all wrong again," and that you're "his charity case," and that "you can't write like you used to" and on and on. I mean you believe it.

I used to be in fear of answering the phone. It got to the point where I'd hear a telephone anywhere...in school...in a phone booth, and I'd jump three feet in the air and my knuckles would get white. It took years, *years* for me to realize that I had some sort of telephobia and could stop jumping at the phone. "No it's not Mort. Even if it is....[Bronx cheer]." It took me a long time to be able to deal with it, because he was right when he told me how tough he'd be.

Later I found out that he considered me one of his better writers, that I was the guy that he could depend on. He felt that he could throw me any title and he knew I'd give him a good product. But that was just how you handled people in those days. If you talked nice to them, they'd want a raise. [Laughter].

I think that if I was older, I could have dealt with it. I would have been able to fire back. Actually that's what happened because when I turned 18, I just started telling Mort, "No."

What happened was that when I was coming to the end of my high school career, I decided I wanted to go to college. I had a scholarship to NYU, an academic scholarship. I wanted to come up to New York and go to school here. I was in horrible debt, so I had to keep working. I had gone to school and written comics at the same time for over four years. And I didn't think I could go home from school every night and sit there at the drawing board.

So I asked Mort if I could have some kind of office job that I could do part-time to earn the money that I would need while I was going through school. He said "No," but he wanted me to keep writing. I thought about that and I just couldn't take it. So I called up Stan Lee, who had never heard of me, and I told him who

I was and that I needed a job. It was amazing just to get him on the phone, and then he said, "Okay, I'll give you ten minutes and I'll look at your stuff.

So I came up to his office, which was at 625 Madison Avenue at the time, and I spent two and one half hours with him. He hired me and gave me a staff job and everything. But, there was a catch. It was a full-time job so I couldn't go to school. That was all right because I really didn't know what I wanted to do. The only thing I knew was comics at that point, and I guess I just wanted to settle out for awhile and figure out what I wanted to do.

Anyway, I started working for Stan Lee at Marvel Comics. My official title was staff writer, but I did everything. I did editing, art corrections, stats, paste-ups, mechanicals, everything. You name it. But it only lasted for about three weeks. It was too tough. I was 18 years old, all alone in the big city, fresh out of Pittsburgh and having trouble finding a place to live. Everything is expensive here. I just said, "What am I doing here?" I owed the whole world money. Life was too tough. So I went back to Pittsburgh.

DAVE: *Coming from Pittsburgh, the son of a steel worker, did you feel intimidated by your better educated and more cosmopolitan co-workers once you came to New York?*

JIM: Well no because Pittsburgh is a pretty cosmopolitan place. Except for New York and Chicago it has the most corporate headquarters and major universities of any city in the country. It's actually a metropolitan area of 3 million people, so it's not a small town. I dealt with a lot of very creative and intellectual people in Pittsburgh, particularly in the advertising agency. The difference was more in the city itself. New York is an oppressive place. Kamikaze cab drivers . . . a lot of people who don't speak English.

When I was 18 and I didn't have a lot of money and I didn't have a place to stay, it was a big hassle. The people didn't overwhelm me. I was actually more comfortable at work than I was walking around on the street.

DAVE: *What kind of work did you do in advertising?*

JIM: I was a freelance art director. I wrote copy, I did design work, I wrote a billboard, I did studio work, consulting, paste-ups and mechanicals, and I even did finished illustrations. I just did anything that needed to be done.

Towards the end of my tenure, I evolved a nice little situation with this one agency that had a very strange political situation. They would keep getting these jobs that were political hot potatoes and the regular art directors would be afraid to touch them. So what they did was to get someone from the outside, so they would throw those to me. Being freelance, they couldn't fire me. So I would do them, and none of them would have to face the danger of being on the wrong side of the political problem and getting fired.

That was good while it lasted, but I got real tired of taking my work into this agency, and sitting there with one of the art directors and having to figure out in which order we should show it to this string of people in charge. If you went in the wrong order, you could get really mixed up. If this guy signs it, then maybe that guy will sign it. If we've got two signatures on it, then maybe the third guy will sign it. If we've got three signatures on it then maybe we can take it to the creative director. If the creative director OK's it, we'll go to the copy chief. If the copy chief OK's it and there are five signatures on it, then we can take it to the vice president. [laughter].

God, I couldn't believe it. People worry about comic books being over-edited . . . they're crazy! You have almost total autonomy if you work in comics, compared to "the world". The real world sucks. This is one of the last places you can do anything, any kind of commercial enterprise, and have any kind of reasonable control over the product that is produced. Certainly more than films or television. Unless you're Alfred Hitchcock or somebody like that.

DAVE: *Did you miss not going to college?*

JIM: Yes. I sort of feel I missed both of the experiences which are *the* experiences for most people; being in the service and going to college. You talk to someone and most of their anecdotes about themselves are based on those experiences. I missed out on both. That's okay, I kept busy. I wanted to go to college, but the circumstances weren't right. Basically I needed to earn a living. I didn't have any choice. That's okay.

Actually I would have gone to college if my parents were wealthy and I could have *just* gone to college. If I only had to study and have fun, well that sounds fine. That sounds like a ball so I'm sorry I missed that.

> ***". . . I was 18 years old, all alone in the big city, fresh out of Pittsburgh, having trouble finding a place to live. I just said, 'What am I doing here?' . . ."***

But as far as it affecting me in my work, well, it hasn't at all. That's the nice thing about being in a creative business. No one ever asks to see your degree, they just want to see your samples.

DAVE: *How did you get back into comics?*

JIM: When I left DC in late 1969, I did not exactly part on good terms with Mort Weisinger. He felt that I'd stabbed him in the back. So I worked for Marvel for three weeks before I went back to Pittsburgh. I didn't really leave Marvel in the lurch, but working in a place for three weeks and then leaving is not exactly a great way to endear yourself. So I figured that I had burned my bridges behind me and I never picked up another comic book. I didn't even pick up my own, which were still coming out on the stands. It was goodbye to comics.

I was mostly doing advertising work when I got a call from Harry Broertjes who had apparently been trying to track me down for a long time to interview me for this *Legion Outpost* magazine. I couldn't believe it, I didn't know anyone was interested in this stuff. So in the process of the interview, Harry wanted to know why I didn't get back into comics. I said, "Well, I don't think I could work for Mort anymore." Harry told me that Mort had left shortly after I did, of which I wasn't aware. I said, "Well, if DC really wanted me, they would have called me." But he insisted that nobody at DC knew where I was. I couldn't believe it because I could still be reached at my mother's address, which was the address they always had. But I also knew that Mort was the kind of guy who was very protective and might not tell anyone that address.

So Harry called some friends of his in New York who worked at Marvel and DC. One of them was Duffy Vohland. Of course, I had no idea who or what a Duffy Vohland was, but when this person named Duffy Vohland called me and said he worked at Marvel, I presumed that he was some sort of editorial executive. He told me that, "We'd love to have you working here. Why don't you come up and see us?" I thought about it overnight and then I flew up here and pretty much just showed up on their doorstep.

I got an enthusiastic reception at both companies and they both offered me work. I was amazed. Marvel offered me things that I'd never heard of like *Man-Wolf*. DC offered me *Superman* and *Legion of Superheroes* again which was exactly the way I'd left them. [Laughter] So I could just step right in and write them. The stuff that Marvel offered was a lot different than anything I'd ever done. It was very complex and it looked as though I'd have to read six years worth of comics before I could even begin. It seemed very complicated and very hard to understand, which is not my style. So I had enough reservations about Marvel, though I frankly would have preferred to work at Marvel. But the fact that I could just step in and begin writing at DC is what made up my mind. That's how I got my job through Harry Broertjes.

DAVE: *When you were working on* Superboy *and* Superman, *did you handle Superman as a separate character, or as the adult extension of Superboy?*

JIM: I don't know that I ever really thought about it. I wrote Superboy as Superman's younger self. I guess I really figured it that way. I always figured Superboy as being a lot better character than the other people did. I felt trapped a little bit with some of the Superman stuff. But I always figured that Superboy would have to be a really terrific guy to be that powerful and still be that nice. [Laughter]. He must be an incredible guy.

DAVE: *You came back to the Legion after being away from comics for 3 or 4 years. During that time you must have grown considerably as a person. Had your approach to the series changed at all?*

JIM: To tell you the truth, I really wasn't sure I could still do this. I just buckled down and tried it. I didn't have any sweeping plans for changing directions, I wasn't striving for a difference. The fact that I was more *mature*, surely must have had some effect on the stuff, but I certainly wasn't conscious of it. I wasn't sure I could do it. It was scary, walking into an entirely new situation.

I was hailed when I walked into the office, "Oh Jim Shooter's back, Oh my God!" and Carmine Infantino walked up to me and said, "Oh, you're the guy who created the Legion." I said, "Well, no, but . . ." They were just thrilled to see me, but I just kept thinking, "What if I can't do it? What if I'm not that good?" Because you gotta understand, when I was working for Mort, he never gave me the impression that I was good. *(Continued on page 71)*

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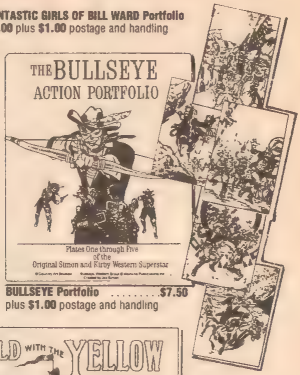

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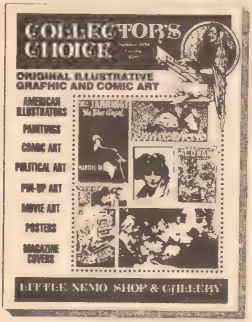

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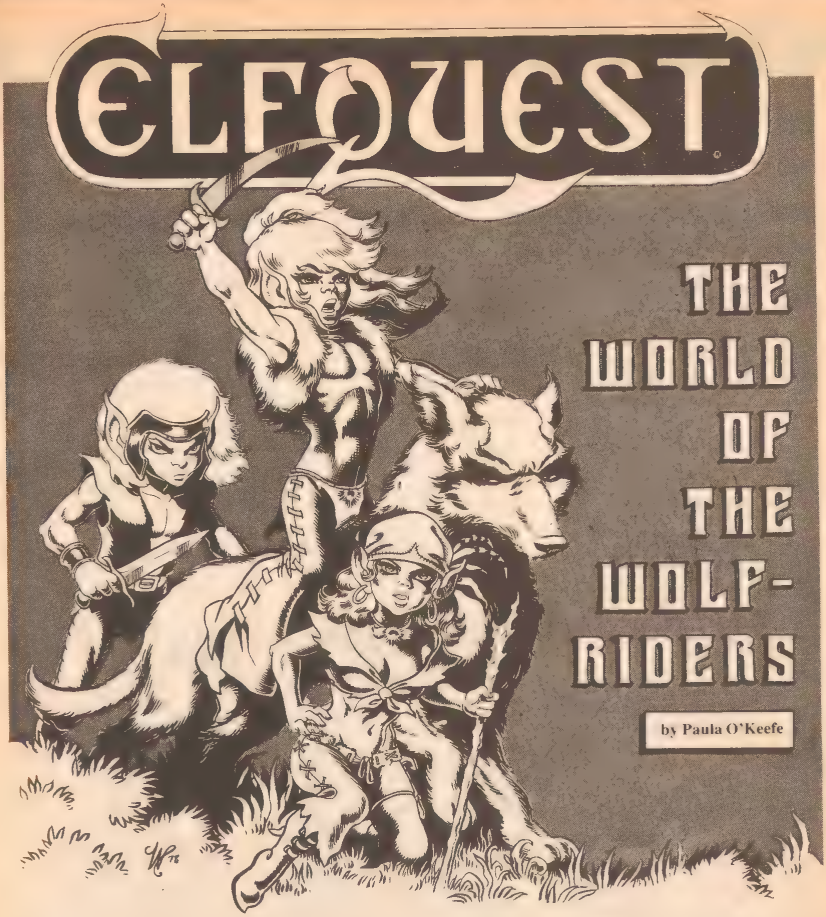


THE WORLD OF THE WOLF-RIDERS

by Paula O'Keefe

The weaving of the world of *Elfquest* began many years before its first drawings were set on paper. In interviews, both Wendy and Richard Pini, co-creators of the series, have discussed Wendy's long-standing affection for elves, husband Richard remarking in the original printing of *Elfquest* that "the elfin-folk have been part of her life since the beginning...The ideas for our stories go back awhile, even before Wendy and I met." (That was in 1969; they were married in 1972.) Apparently, only a feeling that elves had "been done," that there was nothing new to add to the body of elvish tales both folkloric and fictional, kept Wendy from telling any such stories of her own. Until inspired—or, as she put it, given a "kick in the motivation."

That kick was Ralph Bakshi's animated film *Wizards*, which provided the revelation that new variations on the ancient theme could indeed find a home in the 1970's. After considering a comic book adaptation of *Wizards* or a sequel, Wendy and Richard decided to create, instead, an original saga, using the elfin characters Wendy had been sketching for years. The newborn series' first issue was published by the equally newborn Independent Publishers Syndicate comic, *Fantasy Quarterly*, in March of 1978.

While fan reaction was enthusiastic, the Pinis were not entirely delighted with the resulting work. Publisher Timothy Donahue had promised four-color printing, but at the last moment (a few weeks before publication) had resorted to black-and-white, except for the cover. The artwork, carefully planned for color repro, hardly appeared at its best in this format. So, when IPS, like its predecessor Power Comics, folded, the Pinis were left with a not-entirely- pleasant decision. Should they let the well-received but poorly-presented series fade away, or take the plunge that its warm recep-

tion seemed to warrant, and attempt to publish *Elfquest* themselves?—this time to their own exacting specifications?

Their decision, of course, is history. *Elfquest*, now at its eighth issue as a WaRP (*W*endy *a*nd *R*ichard *P*ini) Graphics publication, is among the most acclaimed alternative productions. The first issue has been reprinted and reworked with color covers on glossy stock to match the format of its successors, and neither the storyline nor its quality shows any sign of failing. *Elfquest* has clearly found an audience and a home in fantasy fandom.

So, what of this saga that has attracted such affection? Well, once upon a time . . .

. . .Tall, elegant, lovely elfin aliens descended upon a paleolithic world. Their palace-like home sank through a "hole in the sky" and landed among terrified savages who brutally massacred the newcomers. The surviving elves fled in panic into the forest of the primordial planet, their magic powers weakened in its strange environment. Under the planet's two moons they embarked on an eon-long de-evolution that eventually produced Cutter's Wolfriders.

Smaller than their ancestors (they are about four feet tall, weigh about 60 pounds and have four-fingered hands), the Wolfriders are a seventeen-member elfin tribe who endlessly skirmish with the hostile humans near their forest home. They are commanded by a chief or chieftess, a lifelong and hereditary position. Cutter, the son of former chief Bearclaw, is their current chief. Forest dwellers, shy by daylight, they are hardy and fleet night hunters. They have an uneasy truce with the local trolls, providing them herbal medicines and meat, and bartering furs and leather for the trolls' forged weapons and other metalwork.

The most notable tribal feature of the Wolfriders is their alliance with forest wolves. The elves literally ride the wolves in a loving, working partnership. Much more than riding-beasts or hunting dogs, the wolves are kin to the Wolfriders; they share food, shelter, and can telepathically communicate with their allies. Like their furry kindred, the elves relish raw meat and howl celebrations of pack history by moonlight. The wolves lend Cutter's tribe something special: speed, nocturnal mobility, and a macabre quality that makes the superstitious humans dread every shadow through the trees.

Convinced that their deity Gotara intended the land and its beasts of prey for their use, the humans burn at the stake any "wolf demon" they catch. When Redlance, the Wolfriders' best tracker, is captured, the elves kill a human in rescuing him, and the humans retaliate by torching the forest. Fleeing to the troll caves, the Wolfriders are betrayed and become trapped in a caved-in cavern which exits into scorching desert. With no provisions or water, forced to leave the injured Redlance and his mate Nightfall behind, the exhausted elves make their way across the waste—where, to their amazement, they find another elfin settlement.

Sheltered inside the settlement are the peaceful, more civilized Sun Folk of Sorrow's End. Like the Wolfriders, their ancestors crossed the desert to settle here in long ages past; one ancestor, ancient Savah, still lives among them. The Sun Folk are so sequestered from the rest of their world that they consider humans to be a mere legend and can hardly imagine war or combat. Only one of them (Rayek) is a hunter.

The Wolfriders raid the village for food and water. Cutter almost tramples the settlement priest-leader's daughter, Leetah, as he falls squarely into one of the elves' eldest emotional and biological heritages: Recognition, the instant and irreversible knowing of one's life-mate. He impulsively abducts the maiden and is pursued by Rayek, who considers himself Leetah's intended. They challenge, duel, muse and struggle it out, and Cutter and Leetah join to the joy of most concerned.

Years pass. Leetah delivers twins into the world: tomboy Ember, destined for chieftess rank, and Suntop, recepticle for mysterious and as yet unexplained powers. A skirmish with nomad humans convinces the Wolfriders they're not safe even here, and Cutter determines to set out and locate other scattered elf tribes, uniting them against the human enemy. With his friend and advisor, Skywise, he's off . . .

The magical heritage of the High Ones, as the elves call their ancestors, has been largely lost on the new world. The hunted, secretive Wolfriders use telepathic "sending" and "tree-shaping," a sort of telekinetic Bonsai-craft, extensively, while the Sun Folk have all but lost both arts. Both tribes need, and so have retained, the power of empaphic healing (Leetah has extraordinary healing talent). Leetah can send, but only when in healing rapport or, it's suggested, sexual communion. Savah, the Sun Folk's ancestress, is apparently the only member of either tribe capable of casting her awareness, voice and image great distances. Like the Wolfriders, she can communicate telepathically with animals. Although Rayek has mastered such powers as levitation, he needs a strong emotional impetus to send. The magical powers appear to touch here and there at will unless called for in survival.

The other clear remnants of their forebears' culture that the Elfquest elves bear are soul names and Recognition. Soul names have parallels in human cultures, such as a secret name given children in some Amerind and island tribes, or the coven name chosen by a new witch. The soul name is your true name, known only to yourself, your parents, and your Recognized mate (Leetah knowns Cutter's instantly after Recognizing him though he never speaks it to her). It contains the essence of your identity and self.

Little has been said about soul names' use among elves, but it's interesting that the Sun Folk do not have them or even know what they are. For example, Leetah was aware that she had been imprinted deeply with Cutter's soul name, but she had no idea what that *meant*. Desperately she asks Nightfall of the Wolfriders, who stood stunned at the idea of an elf not knowing what a soul name was.

Recognition is the mysterious and powerful pair-bonding of elfin mates. Exactly what purpose it served for their ancestors is hard to say, and even now it seems more exception than

Elfquest creators, Richard and Wendy Pini relax at the 1980 San Diego Comic Convention with "Cutter" an entry in the costume parade.

CHILDREN OF MY CHILDREN'S CHILDREN... HEAR NOW A CHANT THAT IS OLDER THAN OLD, AND TRUER THAN TRUTH ITSELF...
HEART TO HEART ARE LIFE-MATES BOUND. SOUL MEETS SOUL WHEN EYES MEET EYES...

© 1980 WaRP Graphics

Savah, the Sun Folk's "Mother of Memory" explains Recognition to the elves. (From "The Challenge")

I DON'T UNDER-STAND HER!
NEITHER DO I?
AFTER ALL... WHAT DOES IT MATTER THAT YOU HAVE A FOUL DISPOSITION--
--AND THE MANNERS OF A TROLL?
SHE'S JUST THE FUSSY TYPE, I SUPPOSE...

© 1980 WaRP Graphics

The philosophically inclined Skywise lectures Cutter on the ways of romance. Note the "cloying" Disneyesque cuteness of the elves. (From "Wolfsong")

rule. An interesting sidenote, though, is that it doesn't necessarily include love, though it's to be assumed that a perfect match will eventually bloom into emotional devotion. There is also the possibility that a couple might Recognize despite a mutual emotional indifference or even active dislike. This biological imperative serves as a means of genetic selection. First and foremost it takes place between the best genetic mates and helps to prevent inbreeding in the always-small elfin population.

The *Elfquest* cast is a volatile, compelling and fascinating mix. Cutter is 6 years an orphan when the story begins. The responsibilities of chiefhood were dropped on his young shoulders after the death of Bearclaw. Grabbed by Recognition, Cutter kidnaps Leetah, but soon returns her to her village without a murmur of protest. He tolerates Rayek's jealousy with a remarkably even temper and navigates the complicated challenge rite that Rayek demands he endure.

Cutter has the advantage of an excellent advisor, Skywise. They're a solid partnership, with Skywise's calm reason, insight and slightly mystical perception making a neat balance to Cutter's frequent impetuosity.

Skywise is a stargazer, inseparable from his troll-filched chip of meteorite, which he fancies is part of the North Star. "There is no evil in the stars...or in anything that comes from them," he assures Cutter, probably as much from racial memory as from personal conviction.

He sets his diplomatic talents to smoothing the way between Cutter and Leetah as soon as he sees what's afoot, and becomes a trusted friend of both. Neither is he a flunky; in "Wolfsong" (*Elfquest* 4) he flattens Cutter's ego with impunity. Practical in a crisis, he's a star-tracker, mythmaker, storyteller, peering over the edge of magic into science. He may know his constellation legends, but he also is aware that the stars are suns.

Rayek of the Sun Folk is a moody, smoldering type. He has some of the elfin powers lost to all the desert elves but Leetah and matriarch Savah. At first he appears to be the "heavy" of the tale, with his possessive attitude toward Leetah, his arrogance to his tribespeople and his belligerence to the newcomer Wolfriders. But, he gradually becomes more sympathetic. He naturally assumed he would be Leetah's mate, because he was a lifelong friend. It was difficult to accept her sudden link to a stranger. A self-imposed exile was his final response to her decision.

The center of all this controversy, Leetah, daughter of the Sun tribe's leader, possesses a princess-like quality. She's over 600 years old, still young for an elf but much older than Cutter. Those years have been spent in peace, healing and doing the small, steady work of the community. The Wolfriders' arrival changed all her plans. Only her enormous inner strength helps her to handle this intrusion into her life.

Her loyal fondness for Rayek never dims and she finds it hard to even *like* Cutter, a raw-meat-eating friend of wild beasts. She flashes out in anger at both suitors when they both claim ownership of her. Finally she is able to face the biological demands of Recognition and accepts Cutter.

Savah is the eldest elf in the series so far. "Mother of Memory" to the Sun Folk for her remembrance of history back to its foundation, she is a wonderful creature, tall and elegant, the model of benign humor and gracious wisdom. Her height is due to her great age, as she's much closer in ancestry to the tall original elves than to her descendants in Sorrow's End. She is a physical link to the elves' past and a repository of their great powers.

The supporting characters are just as intriguing. Nightfall, Redlance's defiant mate; genial, stalwart Treestump, Cutter's uncle and eldest Wolfrider; mystical little Suntop and spunky Ember, Cutter and Leetah's twins; Strongbow, the Wolfriders' best archer, sullen and so taciturn he prefers sending to speech; flirtatious Dewshine, Treestump's daughter and Cutter's kid cousin.

The series' strongest point is its subtle and compassionate characterization. The Pinis are able to get the most out of every dramatic situation. Beerclaw is a tough-hearted rogue, but the loss of his beloved mate strikes him so deeply that after her death, he never speaks again. Nightfall staunchly defends Redlance by pelting vultures with stones, as they await their fate in the desert.

The Pinis also have a remarkable eye for detail. One-Eye, another tough fighter, is seen smoothly braiding his mate Clearbrook's long hair. The love of mated couples and parents,

LEETAH TURNS FIRST TO RAYEK, HER LIFELONG FRIEND WHOSE MAGIC POWERS ARE SURPASSED BY NONE SAVE SAVAH...
AND WHOSE RESTLESS, BROODING NATURE IS AS COMPELLING AS AN INTRICATE PUZZLE.
THEN--
--SLOWLY--
--ALMOST AGAINST HER WILL --
LEETAH'S EYES ARE DRAWN TO CUTTER'S. HE IS RAYEK'S OPPOSITE IN EVERY RESPECT -- ARTLESS, FRANK HEARTED, WILD AS A BEAST OF PREY.
AND YET...
©1980 WaRP Graphics

The conflict that sparked the early Elfquest stories. Leetah is torn between her lifelong friendship with Rayek and her Recognition of Cutter (From "The Challenge").

the faith and loyalty of tribe for chief, jealousy, and racial hatred have all surfaced here, and are treated with even-handed realism. The characters have reality and depth, which has certainly helped to endear them with their fans.

Also of interest are the scenic backgrounds, which are rendered with a fine affection for the flora and fauna of both forest and desert. Artist Wendy has claimed an impatience with backgrounds, so this careful detail might well be an exercise in patience, but it works. The character art is graceful, strong and expressive.

However, it might be a little too pretty . . . which is a weakness of the series, or at least a point that puts off some fen of other comics. The elves are undeniably pretty, with large liquid eyes, smooth muscles for the males and graceful curves for the females. The exceptions (stocky Treestump, girl-slender Dewshine, stately Savah and tall Clearbrook) aren't really enough compensation. This Disney-like style is not unpleasant, but it does cloy a bit in such large doses.

Also, the elves just don't seem as alien as the Pinis would probably like, and neither do the humans. The careful insistence that the saga isn't happening on our earth can't carry much weight beside so many customs and behavior patterns we recognize as our own, two moons or no. The savages who slaughter the original elves could easily be Neanderthal-period humanoids; by the Wolfriders' time, they've logically advanced to Cro-Magnon. In flora and fauna, desert and forest, the world could easily be Terra, with the exceptions of zwoots and dreamberries (a combination of wine grapes and peyote, elf-style). As for having elves, trolls, and magic, who's to say old Terra doesn't have those too? They go back to our deepest memory, and figure in some stories the Wolfriders would probably think familiar. It may be unkind to claim the alien-world guise is mainly to shield the creators from cries of racism, but it seems likely, and after all, the Pinis are hardly the first to use it. (It hasn't spared them all such cries, however they insist on it.)

All this, however, doesn't really explain the phenomenon of *Elfquest*'s popularity. This little elfin band, in a mere 8 issues, at the hands of two creators, have acquired the character credibility and affectionate audience that major characters of the long-established companies have taken years and crews of writers to claim. How does it work?

One of the Wolfriders' main advantages is the leisurely pace they're allowed to keep. Unlike the superheroes of overground comics, who're hobbled by convention into slam-bang fight scenes month after month, the *Elfquest* formula generally presents one central scene of dramatic action—by no means necessarily a battle—per triennial issue. The rest is personal development, character interaction, and elfin history, in a comfortable, even-paced blend. There's enough time to know the Wolfriders as individuals, and there's something to know about each of them, though much varies from elf to elf. An overground comic would not reserve space to show that Rainsong is a devoted mother, or that Leetah's sister Shenshen is a little tart about Rayek.

The severe dramatic editing of overground comics isn't applied, and it gives *Elfquest* a full and rather peaceful quality, as befits a story not happening against a background of urban crime or science-fiction warfare. Time is an important factor here; character development, though much more highly regarded in overground comics in recent years than in their past, is still mostly limited there to love affairs and maybe a dash of past personal history, because the present story is what will sell the issue. The elves, by comparison, have ages of racial history behind them. That history is basic to *Elfquest*; ages and ages of slow-paced time, yet full of the conflict between elf and human that fuels their current adventure. Events happen as much as a result of the past as because of present events. The immortal elves' long memories keep that past in firm link with the present.

There's something attractive about this lack of contemporary hurry and haste, this sense of continuity back to ancient days, as can be seen all around us in things like the fascination with genealogy and family histories, groups like the SCA (Society for Creative Anachronisms), the communal movement, Dungeons & Dragons, and even the popularity of historical novels. People can feel an affection for it that's not as easy to feel for the contemporary setting of most other comics.

Also, they *are* elves, and elves, like dragons and unicorns, are a major point of recent fascination as rediscovered medieval loves. Partly this is linked to the interest in things of older, slower days, and partly because they're *magical*. The twilight, ancient magical quality of elves that fascinated Yeats, Dunsany and Tolkien, holds just as many hearts today, I'd venture, as it did when they haunted folk belief. The Wolfriders are deliberately non-ethereal, and their magicks pared down to the utilitarian. But Savah and the first-arrived elves in *Elfquest* 1 have a real magical prowess. The first-born, wisest of all, the Tuatha Dé Danaan and Liosalfar, live on in those elegant creatures.

Wendy Pini compared the appeal of *Elfquest* to that of *Star Wars* in one interview. Though *Star Wars* plays in the arena of SF rather than that of historical or medieval fantasy, it is certainly, in its heroism, imagery of knights and princesses and great visual beauty, a magical movie.

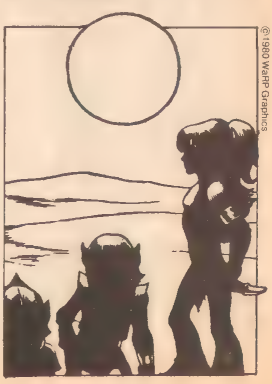
Another aspect of their appeal is the consistency of the elves as individuals. Throughout the Cutter-Leetah-Rayek confrontation, there is no doubt at any time why each does as s/he does. Not all the elves are treated quite as three dimensionally. For example Strongbow is presented as simply a surly, grim human-hater who loves his wife. But *Elfquest*'s main characters are well-rounded enough to be understandable in almost any mood. Compare this to the lesser lights of popular overground groups like Colossus of the X-Men, or almost all of the Micronauts except Bug and Acroyear. With a standing cast of seventeen Wolfriders plus scores of supporting characters, the Pinis have achieved an excellent personality-to-nonentity ratio, in contrast to overground comics with fewer characters.

Of course, overground characters have problems in remaining consistent, especially in retaining one writer/artist team over any appreciable time span. No major company character seems to have this kind of luck for long (maybe Marvel's *Conan* and *Dracula*). This incessant changeover invariably leads to differences in approach with different weight given to this or that aspect of the character, or entirely new aspects being invented. Also, the writer or artist may not especially like the assignment, which can reflect uncomfortably on the character. All in all, it's inevitable that, with changes in fashion (mysticism, relevance, et cetera) and execution, overground comics (as the property of a company) shift the handling of their characters, and thus make them slightly different people, from now to then.

Compare this to the Wolfriders, who have the fortune of remaining in one set of hands, those of their creators, who know them intimately enough to claim to live with them. "They steal cereal and cut notches in the furniture," claimed Richard in the intro to *Elfquest* 1. There's no way they could fail to handle the Wolfriders as real folk. Would that more overgrounders had such luck!

I can recall Frank Thorne claiming to have a rapport with Red Sonja to the extent that he heard her voice and consulted her on story points, and Denny O'Neil holding such a fondness for Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser that he admitted to fearing their intervention if he handled their regrettably short-lived DC vehicle, *Sword of Sorcery*, poorly. These are rarities, as is Steve Gerber and his relationship with Howard the Duck and Man-Thing, but it's notable that these are all characters handled by no one (or almost no one, in Sonja's case) before the artists mentioned. No one had meddled with them much.

And maybe that's the reason for it all: plain personal involvement, affection and love. Personal involvement between the Wolfriders themselves; the Wolfriders and their inventors; and the Wolfriders, their inventors and their audience. A scarce enough element in entertainment these days, it certainly helps make *Elfquest* the wonder and pleasure it is. It's not there to shock and scare or cliffhang you or feed your violent tendencies, it's there to do something as old as elves, tell you a story. And in trying to do something they weren't sure could be done—find a new, enthralling format for the ancient people of the Hills—the Pinis have done something just as new and appealing for the form of comics. ■



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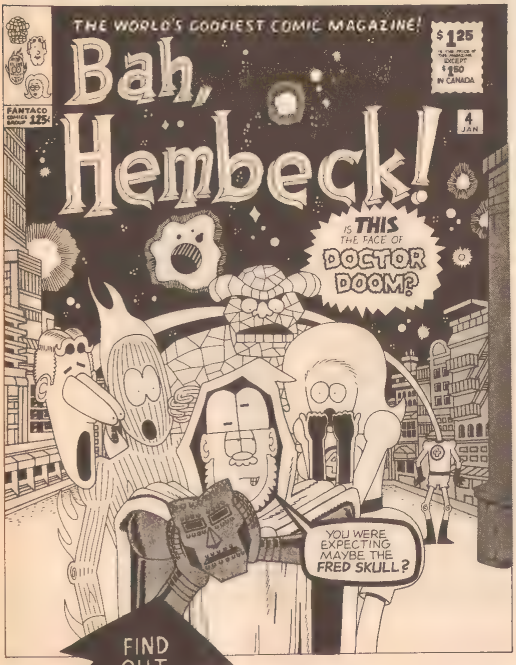
THE MIGHTIEST CHARACTERS OF OUR TIME...



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INVESTIGATING DETECTIVES, INC.

(A brief excerpt from Don McGregor's forthcoming prose book, "The Variable Syndrome," published by Fictioneer Books, Lakemont, Georgia. Copyright 1980 by Don McGregor.)

by Don McGregor

It's a long way to Tipperary.

Or to producing an independent graphic book whose priorities are estranged from the traditional motifs that are unwritten, but enforced, rules at most comic book corporations. Essentially, in the traditional comic outlets, the requirements are a lot of Wham! — a lot more Bam! — but the "Thank you, Ma'am" is strictly forbidden.

The journey to do *Detectives, Inc.*, which has just seen print in July 1980, was a long one of eleven years.

* * *

I have been wanting to write this series since 1969.

Oh, what ambitious visions I had back then for these two detectives, this Ted Denning and Bob Rainier.

I wrote a full script for a 17 page story entitled, "All That Is Left Is Anger." I had described it with one line: "A campus rebel explodes a university into violence and catches Rainier and Denning right in the middle." My friend, Alex Simmons, had never illustrated a complete book before, just as this was my first comic script.

As Alex struggled to finish the book before the annual New York July 4th Comic Convention of 1970, I was head at work on a second script, and had conceptualized the growth of the series for its first twelve books.

I had envisioned a series that would not stagnate. A series where not only would the characters' lives progress, but the strip would also evolve. A series in which each story could be different in tone and style. And best of all, *Detectives Inc.* was a place where I could do any kind of story-telling I wanted: a Western, if the whim came; SF, humor, surrealism, metaphysics or symbolism, topical drama, and even, for a change of pace, a genuine, old fashioned mystery or police procedural. It was the best of all worlds.

It took Alex half a year to finish that first *Detectives, Inc.*, as he squeezed it in between daily battles for survival. By that time, the second script, "The Night They Died," had been finished for four months. Talk about optimism.

"The Night They Died" introduced Bob Rainier's ex-wife as she hired him to protect her new lover, who was recently returned from Vietnam, and I had conceived a restaurant sequence, when they first meet, that executed a symposium of flashbacks colliding with the static atmosphere of their present public meeting.

Alex put the finishing touches on the first issue of *Detectives, Inc.*, the day before we were due to leave for New York for the July Convention. It was my first hectic experience in rushing against a deadline.

You might still find a copy of that first *Detectives, Inc.* It has a shocking pink cover, and I am told that the few copies that have been found mouldering away in some comic book shop have tripled their cover price.

We brought our pride and joy, Denning and Rainier, to the July 1970 comic convention; it is a time so distant, with a life-style so vastly alien to the one I live now, that I remember it almost as if I'd read about it in a book or seen it in a movie.

I handed out a few copies of *Detectives, Inc.* to different editors, including Jim Warren, and it was only months later that I was given the privilege of writing my first comics story for the staggering sum of $25.00. It began to dawn on me that this was not a business where one was going to get rich unless they could a) write very fast b) conceive ideas quickly and c) repeat themselves endlessly.

When the offer came to work at Marvel Comics as a proofreader (Hooray! The big time!) the weekly salary started at $125.00. Try living on that amount in New York City, gang. It'll give you a whole new slant on budgeting and poverty.

The first time I met Rich Buckler I showed him the script for the second, uncompleted issue of *Detectives, Inc.* Alex had drawn several of the pages, long before, and had shown them to Neal Adams, who, at the time, had offered to help finish the pages if Alex continued to work on them. Alex, however, had begun to devote more time toward the acting profession, and with his absence the second issue of *Detectives, Inc.* came to a standstill. Rich was enthusiastic about the project, and while we had no financial backing, he drew three pages of that book, including one depicting Rainier and his ex-wife at a small cafeteria whilst their thoughts are visualized. Without anyone to publish Rainier and Denning's antics, Rich finally had to withdraw.

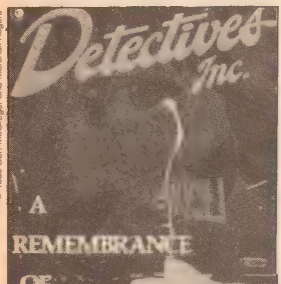
Detectives lay dormant. Maybe it would never be resurrected.

One year, during the early '70s, a young guy came up to the Marvel Comics offices, a young guy with a portfolio. I had forgotten about this meeting, but recently the artist reminded me of the incident. I was more or less a "go fer" around the office, and when enthusiastic newcomers would breach the hallowed halls, I would be sent out to shoo them away, or, if I thought the work had some merit, to let the art director take a glance. I wasn't in the position of hiring artists.

I liked this guy's work. One could tell even this early in the game, he had something

© 1980 Don McGregor and Alex Simmons

The cover of the original *Detectives, Inc.* published in the early 1970's by Don McGregor and Alex Simmons



© 1980 Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers

Marshall Rogers' cover painting for "A Remembrance of Threatening Green" published by Eclipse Enterprises

special, and that he was working at his craft, not just pretending he wanted to draw comics. You could see the hours of labor in his work. You could sense the intent and passion. I told him I couldn't offer any work for Marvel Comics but that I had this independent project I wanted to do, and maybe he could do some work on it.

Well, that never quite worked out, and we went our separate ways.

The artist's name was Marshall Rogers.

* * *

The rest of the decade passed. I survived a real divorce, and when I thought back on the restaurant sequence written years previous for Bob Rainier, I considered writing only stories of happiness and light, with required upbeat endings, just in case I was turning into some type of grim prophet.

And here I hadn't thought I was particularly superstitious.

At approximately the same time I tried to re-adjust to a world now unfamiliar, and one I looked upon with despair and desperation. All of the comic book series I had been writing were either cancelled or taken away. Some of the reasons were due to sales, some were political, some moves were displays of power to show who had it and who didn't.

I had spent three years worrying about and nurturing and planning those books while my world slipped into chaos.

In the lonely hours I wondered what all those long night hours, staring at blank sheets of paper stuck in the typewriter, had been all about.

T'Challa was a fondly remembered ghost.

Old Skull was gone.

They would never speak the words I'd planned, that were scribbled on pieces of paper and in notebooks.

* * *

The major fear at the time was primarily economic. It is still a primary fear, no less frightening, but at that point I had very few books in imminent release, only books in the beginning working phases.

It seemed like I owed money to everybody in the world.

Economic horrors.

Somehow the words don't say it when you are living through it, but as well as the horrors there are strangely tender, poignant moments, between the monthly terrors of where you can possibly acquire enough money to pay the rent.

I remember a Christmas season while I was writing *Dragonflame*. The money situation was desperate, to put it mildly. I was with my daughter Lauren on one of our court appointed weekends, and we walked past holiday hawkers who stood on the Greenwich Village street corners shouting their wares: Christmas trees imported from upstate New York.

"Getcha self ya own Christmas tree, right here! We got the best Christmas trees there is!" shouted a man with three days dark beard and raggedy blue sweater drooping over his apparently marsupial stomach.

Lauren was six years old, alive with Christmas.

I stopped walking, feeling Lauren's hand in mine, remembering a jumble of my own childhood Christmases. There were broken pine branches scattered over the broken, grey slabs of sidewalk.

I had twenty dollars to my name, twenty dollars that had to last through the week, or maybe more; but Lauren was only six once, and very fiercely I wanted her to have a Christmas tree at her dad's house. Intermingled in those emotions was a sense of failure. I had the impulse to run to the comic book offices and tell them I would write anything they wanted me to write so that I could easily afford a Christmas tree for this six year old girl who held my hand and heart, and also so that I would not have to face such guilt and failure.

The man in the raggedy sweater looked at me through the dim light.

"Ya want one?" he asked, shaking one of the trees, a puny thing with scrawny branches.

More branches dropped and collected on the cement.

Lauren stooped and picked up a couple of greens, fingering the pine needles, her dark, wondrous eyes seeing shapes and visions I could not see.

She did not know her father felt like a loser on this cold night.

Twenty dollars in my pocket, I thought. But what the hell, I can survive on ten dollars for the week, maybe even five if I have to pay fifteen bucks for the tree. It'll be a tight week, eating Campbell's soup every day, but I can hack that.

"You want to get a tree, Harry?" I called Lauren "Harry" for Harry Houdini. I also called her "Cutie-kins," which I think she still likes to this day, and sometimes "Wolfgang," just because I liked the sound of it.

"Can we?" she asked.

"Well, sure, but we have to pick it out, you know? We'll have to look them over," I answered, as the hawker scowled at me in the dark and shouted to other passersby to stop and look the trees over. I wondered if he also sensed that I was a loser.

Holding onto her branches, close to her chest, Lauren examined the trees leaning against the battered station wagon that seemed to match the raggedy sweater and the three days growth of beard of its owner.

"How much are your cheapest trees?" I asked, trying to sound casual.

"Twenny bucks!"

"Excuse me?"

"Twenny bucks!" he returned, louder, his eyes already dismissing me.

I felt as if I'd been shot. I knew I was taking this too hard, making too big a deal of it, yet depression hooked claws into my mind and unlocked vast stores of self-pity.

I walked over to Lauren who was judging those Christmas trees with dark eyes. I knelt before her, feeling very sad, as if not only her dreams but my own were endangered.

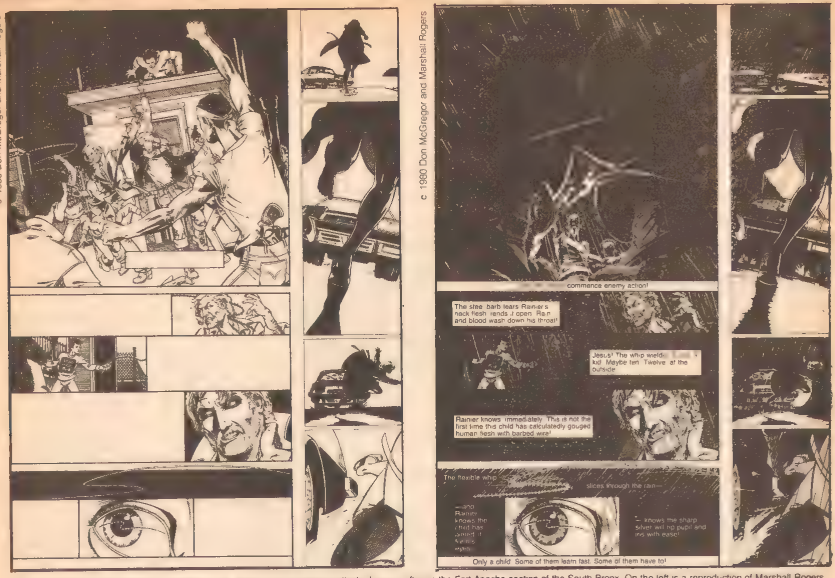
"Honey," I said, finding it hard to talk.

"Yes, dad?" she asked, turning to me.

I looked into those deep, dark brown eyes of six years, and I said, quietly, "Honey, daddy doesn't have enough money to get a Christmas tree. See, they're a lot've money, they're more than I thought, and well, dad just doesn't have enough . . ."

She smiled at me as if I was being much too silly. "That's okay, dad," she said, bouyantly. "Not to worry," and then she held out the two branches she had clutched to her chest. "See, I've still got my branches, and that'll be enough."

It was a Christmas story in some children's book, about the meaning of Christmas, with cute illustrations, except that it wasn't, it was Greenwich Village with shouts and curses and car horns and grocery stores gone dark for the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© 1980 Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers
commence enemy action!
The steel barb tears Rainier's neck flesh rends open. Rain and blood wash down his throat!
Jesus! The whip wielder [illegible] kid. Maybe ten. Twelve at the outside.
Rainier knows immediately. This is not the first time this child has calculatedly gouged human flesh with barbed wire!
The flexible wire [illegible] slices through the rain—
[illegible] Rainier knows the child has armed it for this very—
— slipped the sharp sheen will rip pupil and eye with ease!
Only a child. Some of them learn fast. Some til them have to!

A sequence from the prologue to *Detectives, Inc.* Rainer and Denning are attacked on a rooftop in the Fort Apache section of the South Bronx. On the left is a reproduction of Marshall Rogers original pen and ink breakdowns. On the right is the page as it finally appeared in the printed version of *Detectives, Inc.* Note the alteration of the first panel from an objective presentation of the scene to the more surreal final panel with its amplified sense of motion and dark, riotous violence.

night, and there were no illustrations, there was only this dear daughter of mine whose words brought tears to my ears I could not explain, tears that were a mixture of love and hurt and hope. I could not hold her close enough. She was six years old, she could not understand her father's tears, I'm sure, but she held me also, tiny arms stretched up round my neck, not precociously but innocently, with a love I felt I did not deserve and did not want to lose, ever.

I write about it now so that I won't forget that time, and that some day she might read about it. I wonder how she will remember that night, if she will recall anything of it at all.

As the decade concluded I started some new independent projects: a prose book called *Dragonflame*; and an illustrated book for Eclipse Enterprises. We met at the right time, and I think we were good for each other. The result was *Sabre*.

During the wait for these books to see print my life changed again. I met Marsha Childers, in a chance encounter. Both of us might not have gone where we did that night, and then would have missed each other. Marsha captured life and gave it to me, and returned the city to me as well. We had a glorious, exultant time that winter of 1978.

* * *

The money situation wasn't any brighter, but the world was.

I felt able to breathe again, without the fear that I would shatter.

It's a long way to Tipperary.

Even in 1978.

In July of that year, Marsha and I visited that perennial July 4th Comic Convention, and it was there that I first approached Marshall about doing *Detectives, Inc.*

Marshall agreed to do the project for Eclipse Enterprises, and asked that I write a complete script rather than a plot synopsis.

Detectives was finally going to be done, and now I had to make good on all those things I told myself over the years that this series could be. Obviously it could not all be done in one book, but that first book had to say, quite clearly, that comics can do anything a writer and artist want them to! They do not have to have a strict, uniform structure. Comics can deal with sensitive subject matter. Comics can try to reach for a human response, whether it is laughter or tears or anger or exhuberance.

I began to work, with fear and tension, love and excitement.

Fear, you ask? Tension? But why?

Because it was eleven years later, and here was my chance to finally bring Denning and Rainier to life, and all the visions of the past decade refused to be tamed.

Which sequences would I have to reject to accomodate the logistics of the project? Which segments of their lives should I show in this one book?

Since I had refused to sign the comic industry's "Work Made For Hire" contract in July of 1978, and had been told to find the nearest doorway, since, because of that decision, my name had been removed from a story I had written and another writer's name placed on that story (all of which is gone into at length in *The Variable Syndrome* book), and since Marsha was seven months pregnant, this new book, *Detectives, Inc.* had damn well better work out.

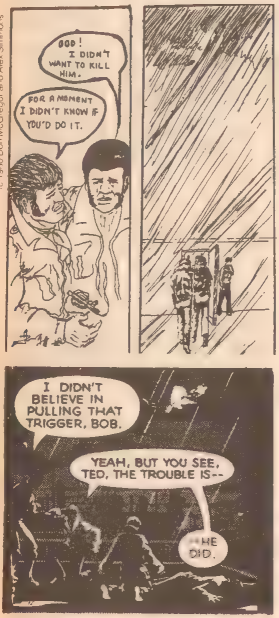
I planned the Prologue sequence for five pages. I wanted this opening gambit to culminate in the brutal consequences that would shape Ted Denning's life from that day forward, just as they had in that first fanzine issue in 1969, way back when. I changed the college campus background, since that was not a particularly active enivironment circa 1978: Kent State whispered of death and frustration almost forgotten save as another myth of atrocity. Apathy and narcissism had become the prime curriculum. So I transplanted Denning and Rainier from that sequestered university and placed them on a rooftop in the South Bronx, in Fort Apache territory.

And found that five pages would not accomodate all the material.

I squeezed and reshaped the scene. And sweated. And rewrote.

Denning and Rainier were surrounded by a gang, some members who were only ten or twelve years old. They were all armed, and I was surrounded by a limited amount of pages. Anything I used here had to come from the central plotline of the book.

I managed to cram the sequence into eight pages.


GOD! I DIDN'T WANT TO KILL HIM.
FOR A MOMENT I DIDN'T KNOW IF YOU'D DO IT.
I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN PULLING THAT TRIGGER, BOB.
YEAH, BUT YOU SEE, TED, THE TROUBLE IS--
--HE DID.

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© 1980 Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers

How does one approach the same scene after the passage of 11 years? Excerpted above are two different versions of the end of the prologue of *Detectives, Inc.* Ted Denning has just killed a man to save his partner's life. Note that in both sequences rain is used to set the mood of the scene

When Marshall read the pages over, and began to sketch the graphics, he told me he'd need at least three more pages to work all the characters and incidents in.

That meant those pages had to come from the rest of the book, which I had already structured, scene for scene.

Three pages had to be cut, and I had already trimmed many scenes I'd wanted to include.

There is a noticeable lack of authority at the conclusion of that Prologue. The law enforcement agencies are mentioned but not one representative of the state appears on the scene. Denning and Rainier originally had to face the police and explain why they had gone onto that shadowy, rain-swept rooftop. The scene became a luxury, even though it hinted at the legal procedures they would have to undergo in future books.

Detectives was broken down into chapters after its lengthly Prologue. I had written a short chapter with Rainier sitting through an appointment with his shrink. He may be one of the first private eyes that regularly visits a shrink. The chapter was planned as an essentially humorous one until its painful conclusion at the end of the hour. Another chapter took place between Denning and his father after they had discovered that his mother is seriously ill, a scene where father and son speak some of the truths they have left unspoken for years. They were important scenes with interesting characters and situations that showed a background texture as to how the events shaped both Denning and Rainier. But these scenes, too, became a luxury and had to be cut.

* * *

All too often, on television, death is transient.

The hero kills a person, agonizes about it (maybe!) for that one set episode, but by the next week it is as if a killing had never been introduced into their lives.

Not so with Denning.

The ramifications of such an act and how they affect Denning specifically are only hinted at in the book. Denning won't conveniently forget, in order to make way for a new story-line.

* * *

This book violated almost every taboo I had had to live with for the three years I did those series for Marvel Comics under different editorial wisdoms.

The Prologue consumed a third of the book. Unheard of.

People talked to each other for more than two pages at a time without any sleight of hand to make the editors think something else was going on.

This may not sound like such a big deal outside the comic book industry, but the central plotline is not introduced until page 20 of the book. You could lose a head, or some other portion of your anatomy, for such a heinous, unpardonable crime.

In comics, a writer often has to act like a whore who can never say, "No," to any edict; and often the pimpish demand is that you turn the trick or find another block to walk. There are lots of other hookers to take your place who will turn the trick, who will take over any title that is offered to them with glee at the departed's misfortune, who will bring any character back from the dead to help potential television sales, and who will introduce marketable toy elements into the books to please the merchandisers.

The publishers and editors control the block. They can say, "No." They may say it benevolently; they may say it with sadistic pleasure. The word "No" is considered part of their dictatorship.

If the writer says "No," he is a liability.

The more the writer says, "No," the greater liability he is.

If he refuses to do a series because it is a series someone else has worked on for a long period of time, the writer is looked upon with suspicion. If he refuses to do a series because it does not appeal to him, because he finds it personally objectionable, he is considered unprofessional. Turn the trick, kid.

If the writer says, "No!" in connection with a story he has written, if he is fighting to retain some element he finds worth fighting for, the rulers of the block are often personally offended. By refusing to make the changes requested, it is as if the writer has insulted the whole corporate structure.

They do not understand when the writer pleads, "I don't want you to make these changes and destroy this story; I do not want you to kill something I have put so much time and energy into. I do not want to substitute the Sons of the Moosehair for the Ku Klux Klan; I do not want to make a doper out of an innocent kid who gets his head busted open by cops in a drug bust; I do not think a concurrent story-line is too difficult for the readers to follow; I do not agree that the entire readership of the comic industry has to change every three to four years; I do not agree that comics must only be superheroes or cartoons or pseudo-science-fiction with a heavy hand of sadism and no sense of story structure or ethics; I do not . . ."

I finished *Detectives, Inc.* in November of 1978.

* * *

It was still a long way to Tipperary, and to making this book a reality.

Marshall had forty-six complex pages to break-down, to consider just as a movie director considers a movie script.

Steve Englehart, in the 1979 Comic Art Convention booklet, wrote a piece on Guest of Honor, Marshall Rogers. He said Marshall gave him everything he asked for, and knew everything he hadn't asked for.

Steve was right. What an uncanny instinct this Marshall Rogers has. And what respect he has for the writers he is working with.

Marshall brought Denning and Rainier to life, and more. He integrated the copy with the graphics, making them inseparable. He captured the cadence and meter, the pauses and tensions, of my dialogue; he interpreted the work and added his own fillips.

* * *

By the spring of 1979, as I was working as a typist for a temporary work agency, I saw the first break-downs of the book. I was coming off a long, cold winter, having had to stop writing for the first time since 1970. At first, I felt defeated, as if I'd battled so long only to come to this end: typing computer charts at Chase Manhattan Bank or travelling up to Columbia University in sub-zero weather to type dissertations (Believe me!) on the "Door-to-Door Distribution of Contraceptives in Haiti" or to typing name tags for an Alcoholics Unlimited Convention. That was just a few of the cheery places I'd spent February and March.

I'd ended up in such a position because I had refused to sign the comics "Work Made For

Hire Contract." As I mentioned earlier, that conflict is gone into at length in *The Variable Syndrome* book, including the fact that it was just before the birth of our son Rob Roy.

Suffice to say, here, that almost two years have passed since that "Work Made For Hire" contract went into effect. Now, you seldom hear anyone murmur a discouraging word about this controversial piece of paper, though it stirred a hornet's nest when it was first introduced. The stipulations in that contract have become standard procedure in the comics industry.

Sign away your rights. Be obedient children.

The highest paid creative people of the major comic book titles covered their asses, signed that contract, and in the process sold every other writer and artist who wants to work in this industry up the river. Before you can draw one figure, write one line, you'll have to sign all your rights away, forevermore!

* * *

In the spring of 1979 I began to write some stories for Louise Jones, who was an editor at Warren Magazines at the time. I scripted "The Trespasser" story, which Paul Gulacy illustrated, and then began a mammoth project for Louise that concerned the "Loch Ness Lament," and "Sweetwater Nessie and the King Kong Syndrome."

Louise was an empathic, enthusiastic editor, a combination I have rarely found in those sitting on the editorial throne. I never felt I was being led into the dentist's chair when I entered her office. The Nessie concept grew from its original forty pages to that of plus seventy. The story dealt with various carnivores. The one with the hugest appetite was the media and its insatiable need for new, stimulating stories, devouring assassinations, mass suicides, and movie starlets, and how that constant, superficial gestation affects us.

Louise never played any of the political shenanigans or power games that I had encountered previously in other establishment comics companies. If she gave her word, she kept it; she did not alter her attitude with the passing mood. She gave me room to let a story shape itself, without looking over my shoulder at every idea and, saying it could not be done. When she edited material she had the courtesy to call me and let me go over the work with her. I always felt we had mutual respect for each other's talents.

With *Detectives, Inc.* still a long ways from completion, the work for Louise at Warren helped Marsha, Rob Roy and I survive.

And then it ended!

There is no security in this business. I was twenty-five pages into a vampire western called "Soiled Doves and Moral Blood," which I had spent three months researching, when the cutback occurred. New stories could not be bought for an indefinite length of time. The day I learned I could not finish the western was on November 29, 1979. One year before, exactly to the day, I had finished the script for *Detectives, Inc.* The promise for future work looked bleak in 1978 and it did again in 1979. I hope to hell November 29th in 1980 promotes a beginning rather than its annual ending. But in 1979, the end of November held only the prospect of a cold, hard winter.

* * *

Destitution was at hand on the eve of another Christmas. *Detectives Inc.* and *The Variable Syndrome* were still months away from completion or publication.

Finally, I had the rough pencil sketches for the beginning pages of *Detectives Inc.*, and I knew it was worth the trip from 1969.

Denning and Rainier were finally on their way.

I wanted to hug Marshall!

I couldn't find the words that would adequately tell him how much I appreciated his adding his talent and vision to mine, and for the faith he had in the book. His design and storytelling is much in accord with the kind of graphics I see in my head but cannot draw.

Unlike the huge amount of books a corporation must sell and where the individual audience is someone they easily overlook as not making any difference to their total sales picture, the reader's support for independent projects like *Detectives, Inc.* and *The Variable Syndrome* and other independently produced books by other artists and writers are the life-blood of this market. The support of the readers does more than insure one book's survival. These readers make it possible to offer more books, of different ideas and characters than could ever be done in the more traditional outlets.

If *Detectives, Inc.* entertains you, provokes you, unsettles you, stimulates you and gives you several hours of pleasure and introspection, it will have been successful.

Both Marshall and I will be awaiting your verdicts. ■

WHAT RE YOU DOING?
SO, WHY DID YOU CALL TODAY? WHY'D YOU BRING IT ALL BACK?
IT WAS FIVE MONTHS DEAD, AND I WAS LIVING WITH IT.
--SLAVES TO SLOGANS AND CURRENT SENTIMENT...
BUT MOSTLY, YOU'VE MADE US--
--VICTIMS
DON'T BE SO MELO-DRAMATIC, ROBERT. MARTYRDOM DOESN'T BECOME YOU, YOU SELF-PITYING BASTARD!
A FRIEND OF MINE AT THE MATERNITY CLINIC WHERE I WORK PART-TIME IS HAVING SOME TROUBLE.
THAT'S WHY I WANTED TO MEET YOU.
A FRIEND THAT'S CLASSIC!
WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT MY LOVER, ROBERT.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A MID-WIFE, WHOSE NAME IS RUTH HAMILTON. SHE'S ALMOST OBSESSED BY HER FRIEND'S DEATH -- YOU SHOULD SEE HER, IT'S TERRIBLE!
SHE'S GOT SO MANY PROBLEMS, AND YOU KNOW HOW I LIKE TO HELP
DON'T DO THAT YOU KNOW HOW I
JUST DON'T DO IT!
YOU'RE A TRUE ALTRUIST, RITA.
I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU AND YOUR COLORED FRIEND COULD EASE HER MIND BY LOOKING INTO THIS NASTY SITUATION
YOU MEAN MY ASSOCIATE, RIGHT, RITA? YOU MEAN MR. DENNING?
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE MAN WHO SAVED MY LIFE THREE WEEKS AGO, THAT'S THE MR. DENNING WE ARE TALKING ABOUT. KEEP IT IN MIND.
APCLP

One page from the "First Casualty on the Hibachi Battlefield" chapter of *Detectives, Inc.* Rita, Bob Rainer's ex-wife has contacted him on a professional basis but the private investigator can not converse with her as an objective professional. The "round" of applause for the theatrical Japanese chef in the final panel is a good example of Marshall Rogers' animated sound effects.

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AN URBAN VISUAL NOVEL

by Frank Lovece

Detectives, Inc.

"A Remembrance of Threatening Green"
46 pg. b/w visual novel/color cover/softbound
Eclipse Enterprises, NY, 1980/$6.95

writer: Don McGregor
artist: Marshall Rogers
letterer: Tom Orzechowski

McGregor's at it again.

From the pen of the midnight elf comes Eclipse's latest offering, a humanist drama which . . .

—Stop right there.

Double bind. If you hide behind the façade of objectivity, you run into a problem with *Detectives, Inc.* or any other addition to the new territory of comic novels (a term about as descriptive as "a fisherman's basketball"). And if you deal with them as innovations, it's automatic apology for their failings. *The Saturday Review of Books'* capsulization of *Detectives, Inc.* might conclude that "the novel attempts to gamely dissect a collection of social and sexual injustices, but the author's scattershot approach and frequent lapses into melodrama negate his intended effect. He leads the reader the long way home then deserts him in the street," and be true to a point, but that summary's incomplete when it deals with this almost unexplored new medium. The reason it seems so clear now is that *Detectives, Inc.* is not only part of an innovative field, but a first.

The bulk of visual novels (my preferred term) has gone out to a science-fiction/fantasy audience. McGregor's earlier *Sabre* certainly did; Gil Kane's pioneering *Blackmark* and the European reprints have done almost nothing but. *Detectives, Inc.* is the first visual novel to attempt telling a straight-faced mainstream story.

Detective books have been done in this medium before, with Steranko's *Chandler* and Preiss/Reese's satiric *Schlomo Raven* among them, but they've always kept within the traditions of that genre. *Detectives, Inc.* is more the story of two men who happen to be detectives, the way other protagonists are lawyers, samurai or fake mental patients. They deal with the investigation of a lesbian midwife's murder no more intently than with their own love lifes, eating habits, monthly bills and Stranger-like (as in Camus, not Stan Lee) observations of humanity's inhumanity.

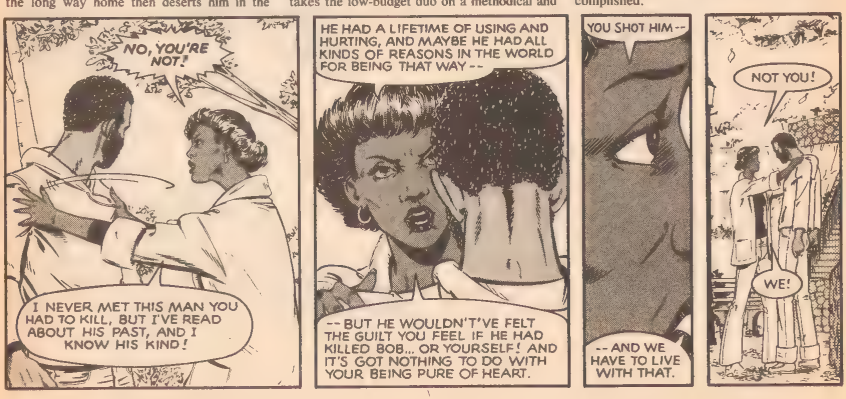
Detectives, Inc. is Ted Denning and Bob Rainier, two ex-GIs with a penchant for introspection and laugh-clown-laugh wisecracking. The story opens with a street-gang sequence peripherally related to the main plot, which takes the low-budget duo on a methodical and wholly realistic search for the murderer of midwife Ruth Hamilton's lover, Linda Clarke. There's a scene with Rainier's ex-wife that serves as transition and background. The story is divided into titled chapters, making the effort less that of a novel than a series of interconnected episodes.

There's a lot of Evan Hunter there, the influence of a favorite McGregor author; traces of *The Blackboard Jungle*'s idealistic schoolteacher and *A Matter of Conviction*'s compassionate lawyer. There are homages paid to *I Spy* and perhaps *The Man from UNCLE* (the latter in the dialog's repetition of a couple of chapter titles). And after each chapter's introspective opening narratives, the story moves almost totally by dialog and artwork alone. No "But meanwhile"'s. The page layouts, though sometimes blocky, have a stream-of-consciousness flow that lead into characters' daydreams and memories. Rainier's thoughts are the most vivid especially when he listens to Ruth talk about her murdered lover.

There are problems. McGregor pendulum-swings from brilliant to banal dialog, for one. As Ruth explains, in simple language, the extent of her love for the dead Linda, the dialog is some of the most moving and effective ever put to a comics page. But when a black street youth tells the detectives, "My men, they know 'bout fuckin' promises from asshole politicians, and known 'bout empty bellies, too," to which Denning replies, "Cut us some slack and no one has to get hurt," it's a little hard to swallow from a writer who once lived in Harlem and should have listened harder.

The plot, too, runs thin at times, seemingly a vehicle solely to display a series of complex, vulnerable, sometimes despicable characters caught in, as Rainier says, a complicated world. To have Ruth state, for example, that "The authorities have (Linda's death) marked as a hit-and-run," not homicide, when the coroner must have *known* it happened after hours at a deserted (her body went undiscovered for two days) park shows either TV-like rushing to get to the meat of the story or else the insensitivity of the police. The problem is, you can't tell which.

But this is simplistic analysis. You have to understand the author to see what's been accomplished.


NO, YOU'RE NOT!
I NEVER MET THIS MAN YOU HAD TO KILL, BUT I'VE READ ABOUT HIS PAST, AND I KNOW HIS KIND!
HE HAD A LIFETIME OF USING AND HURTING, AND MAYBE HE HAD ALL KINDS OF REASONS IN THE WORLD FOR BEING THAT WAY--
--BUT HE WOULDN'T'VE FELT THE GUILT YOU FEEL IF HE HAD KILLED BOB... OR YOURSELF! AND IT'S GOT NOTHING TO DO WITH YOUR BEING PURE OF HEART.
YOU SHOT HIM--
--AND WE HAVE TO LIVE WITH THAT.
NOT YOU!
WE!
© 1980 Don McGregor and Marshall Rogers

An expression of love. Ted Denning recieves some much needed solace and compassion from his lover, Vera Lawrence after being forced to kill a man.

In everything he writes, McGregor communicates pain. His endings reflect hope, even boyish optimism, but the stories themselves convey the hurts and fears of the urban masses, of people like him, all caught up in the facelessness imposed by society in the name of efficiency, convenience and mass appeal. His heroes have in common the fact that they *are* common, whether it's Luke Cage who can't get crosstown in time to face the villain, or detectives who let their own prejudices and hang-ups interfere with their work.

His recurring themes are as alive in *Detectives, Inc.* as in any other bit of the McGregor mythos. Rainier and Denning fight Capraesque struggles against endless City Halls, for individual dignity and under the roller-coaster panacea of McGregor's central vision for a better world, the concept of romantic love.

In that respect, he's the eternal adolescent, and even chides himself for it, as when Rainier's ex-wife Rita refers to her former husband and his partner as "some sordid version of Culp and Cosby. You're kids who never grew up. I came to you because I'd hoped you had become an adult." There's a line of distinction here Rita misses, one described best in the musical *The Fantasticks* — being childish is not the same as being child-like. For McGregor to embody that vision of mutual acceptance and of playing, as a child, with the magical fantasies of life we let slip away in the name of "maturity" is beautiful in its hope and innocence. The constant neon backstreets and urban grotesqueries of much of his work seem only as if to convince us this innocence isn't born of naiveté.

With Rita as the voice of conventional adult wisdom, McGregor feels safe in acknowledging his child-like hold on life's magic. Hearing Rita tell Rainier that "Martyrdom doesn't become you, you self-pitying bastard," and not to be so melodramatic is wonderful. And the fact that melodramatic Rainier then goes on to call a statement of his partner's "sophomorically compelling" carries the relationship between author and character even further because the statement Rainier chastises ("a drowning man on the edge of nowhere") is that particular chapter's title.

McGregor's themes and self-analyses leave you with a pattern, a compassionate and hopeful but redundant one. His stories of intimate pain and fear and hope all revolve around the same person: his idealized self. The Black Panther's philosophical stance is little different from Killraven's or Luke Cage's or from those of any number of his short-story protagonists in either comics or prose (Even so, the eccentric Hodiah Twist and his later creations, Sabre and Dragonflame, are a bit more individualized. There's forward progression in McGregor's characterizations.).

And yet—! How many comics writers are there who can be talked about in terms of their characters' philosophical stances? With McGregor (and Marshall Rogers as well, who entered comics by helping redefine nothing less than a modern American folk-myth, The Batman), you have works which are less than the traditional novel yet more than simply comics. Where even the best visual novels before *Detectives, Inc.* were esssentially glorified comic books, McGregor/Rogers' effort is an honest-to-God *book*. And while some of its failings (its typically comic bookish climax easily the worst of these) come from the comics, its strengths — universality, sophisticated symbolism, characters existing in a past/present/future continuum — are distinctly literary.

Take one example, the concept of "green."

At its most naked, green is lust and jealousy. Linda's murder comes out of it; Ruth says "love and lust . . .how can you beat that combination?" and Rainier, at dinner with his ex-wife, is worried that he might "want to reach up (her) dress," and give in to it.

But clothe the color and there's more. Summertime, season of life. It may be coincidence Linda's body on the cover is a green silhouette with white, the color of winter, superimposed, but the story's resolution takes place in winter, and the green of a Christmas tree is balanced by clean, white snowflakes. Whether by conscious design or not, this imagery is a traditionally literary cycle.

Now once more add a layer, and in true literary, even poetic, fashion, McGregor makes a powerful point about love and lust — that unbeatable combination — and jealousy, as Rainier reminisces about his last summer with Rita:

> "The landscape was more real than us, more permanent . . . I was afraid of what the green suddenly told me, made me realize about our lives . . . I couldn't force myself to move, to scream— *'The green is going to get us.'*"

The crux, the point, the lesson to be learned: Rainier is afraid of impermanence, of love's temporary bloom. Green is his icon of eternity, the perpetual circle of growth-death-growth. Love, even lust, fades away into ghostly memory, but the green continues, always there to remind. McGregor goes beyond the surface to reveal himself honestly, which few writers attempt in a plot-and-action world of comics. A *novel*? Perhaps not. But for all its outer failings, *Detectives, Inc.* is literature.

None of this is to leave Marshall Rogers aside. The illustrations in L. Frank Baum's *Oz* books or the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyam (the Grateful Dead's rose-crowned skeleton comes from Edmund Sullivan's famous visualization of Khayyam's epic poem) are familiar images, but the writer is still the acknowledged star. It's a shame in what must be a symbiotic effort here, to go that same route. I suspect *Detectives, Inc.*, like *Sabre*, will be considered "McGregor books," though each features brilliant artwork.

Readers weaned on comics' visual imagery will be uneasy with Rogers' art here, at least momentarily, since character anatomy is realistic, not exaggerated into balloon-like muscles and tits (the shared norm, strangely enough, of comics and X-rated movie posters). His characters also show *expressions*, not a series of stock facial contortions, another unfortunate hallmark of most comics. And echoing Will Eisner's masterful uses of graphics and lettering (with help, I'm sure, from letterer Tom Orzechowski), Rogers crams as much ambience and atmosphere onto a black-and-white page as a good 40's cinematographer could to a film screen. The way he illustrates "a round of applause," for example, is just great.

Detectives, Inc. breaks new ground for visual novels, and its continuation as a series may allow McGregor (though much less so Rogers) to polish up the act. There's a place for serious dramas of scared urban dwellers so buffeted and overloaded by messages, media, sheer numbers and some unwritten rule that maturity means never being able to see shapes in clouds anymore. The novel cannot be judged from the standpoint of comics because its inventions and targets are beyond what's been considered the traditions of comics. No cynical sneers are needed from the press. ■

Back Issues

#1: Features interviews with Michael Fleisher and Joe Jusko; Don McGregor examines *The Shining*; Andy Helfer reviews *The Empire Strikes Back*; the last days of the JSA; the Kirby experiment at DC; *Spider-Man* newspaper strip critiqued; and much more.

#2: Includes Steve Englehart interview; Don McGregor examines the daredevil roots of *Empire*; Who is Dr. Who?; Andy Helfer reviews *The Blues Brothers*; Close-Ups on Popeye and Flash Gordon; a celebration of the Warner Cartoon Studio; Rick Bryant profiled; *Dopin' Dan* by Ted Richards; *Blowtorch* by Murad Gumen; Bryant wraparound cover; and more

#3: George Perez interviewed; The Inner City Romance Comic; Don McGregor reviews *Bon Voyage Charlie Brown* and recounts misadventures in Paris; more *Dopin' Dan*; a new comic strip by Charles Vess; *Blowtorch*: Betty Boop for President?; Birth of the Videozine; Gardener Fox update; the Lone Ranger Rides Again; Perez cover, and, of course, much more.

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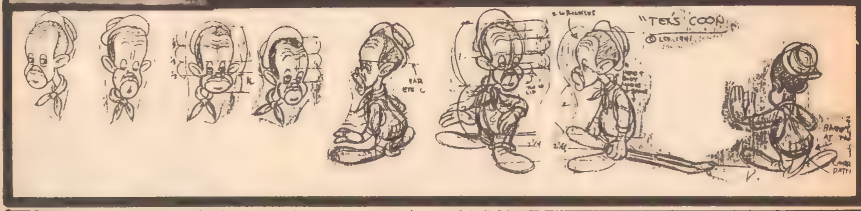

by Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald

On August 27, 1980, the *New York Times* ran a short item on its obituary page:

> *"Fred (Tex) Avery, the cartoonist who directed the first cartoons featuring Porky Pig, Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck, died of cancer yesterday. He was 71 years old."*

There is more that needs to be said about Tex Avery. Much more.

Avery was a master of the animated cartoon. He was the creator of the school of cartoon comedy that American animation is best known for. In the 30's & 40's, the "Golden Age" of Hollywood cartoons, Avery pioneered many new directions, such as faster pacing, funnier and more identifiable characters and entirely new methods of story direction.

Frederick Bean Avery was born in Taylor, Texas, on February 26, 1908. In 1929, at the age of 21, Avery moved to Hollywood with the ambition of becoming a newspaper cartoonist. Unable to sell his strip, he took a job at the ink and paint department of the Walter Lantz cartoon studio. Within a few years, he worked his way up the ladder to the position of animator. In 1935, hearing there was an opening for a director at Warners, he applied and producer Leon Schlesinger gave him the job. Schlesinger also gave Avery his own animation unit (which included animators Chuck Jones and Bob Clampett) and put them to work in a small building lovingly referred to as "Termite Terrace.". It was there that Avery officially began his directing career. His next six years at Warners were filled with great developments, both for him and the cartoon medium.

During that period his accomplishments included: directing the first cartoon that starred Porky Pig (*The Blow Out* - 1936), creating Daffy Duck (*Porky's Duck Hunt* - 1937) and defining the characters of Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd (*A Wild Hare* - 1940). He developed and refined the spot gag cartoon with his documentary spoofs (*The Isle of Pingo Pongo* - 1938, *Detouring America* - 1939 and *Wacky Wildlife* - 1940) and explored whole new directions in the musical cartoon genre. In *Page Miss Glory* -1936, he animated Busby Berkley dance numbers to lavish Art Deco backgrounds; his *Penguin Parade* - 1938, used fast-paced timing to great comic effect.

Though Leon Schlesinger gave his crew complete freedom in the making of their cartoons, Leon always had the final say. When Schlesinger removed the end gag from Avery's *The Heckling Hare* - 1941, this led to a disagreement between the two, and Avery left Warners in early 1942. He went to Paramount short subject producer Jerry Fairbanks and developed their *Speaking of Animals* series. After a short while he answered an offer to again set up his own animation unit, this time at the MGM cartoon studio run by Fred Quimby.

In Avery's 1938 Warners cartoon, *A Feud There Was*, a character proclaims, "In one of these cartoon pictures, a body can get away with most anything." That thought pertains even much more fully to his MGM years. At Warners Avery established his cartoon vocabulary and at MGM he developed and exploited it even more fully. He pushed the limits of the gag cartoon further than anyone has gone, before or since. In the opening of Avery's very first MGM release, *The Blitz Wolf* - 1942, he parodies MGM's famous opening titles. He has their

From left to right: cover sheet of the Tex Avery-directed first Tex Avery-directed Warner Brothers. A model sheet from **All This and Rabbit Stew** (1941). An example of Avery's exaggeration from **The Early Bird Dood It** (MGM, 1942). Avery's second Warner Brothers cartoon, **I Love to Singa** starring, as you can see, the new graphic for Warner Brothers **Merrie Melodies** series.

prestigious lion trademark roaring to the downbeat of the jazz tune *Tiger Rag*. And this was only the beginning.

During his first year at MGM, he introduced the two most famous continuing characters that he created at that studio. Droopy, the sad-faced little dog, made his debut in *Dumb Hounded* - 1943, where he confounds an escaped convict by appearing at every turn. The sexy star of *Red Hot Riding Hood* - 1943, caused such a sensation with our troops overseas that she was brought back in many cartoons throughout the 40's.

Another Avery creation from his early years at MGM was Screwy Squirrel, the wildest of the screwball era of funny animals. Screwy was never without a stick of dynamite or a mallet for his foes. In Screwy's premiere cartoon, we meet cute little Sammy Squirrel collecting nuts for the winter. He encounters Screwy, who takes him behind a tree and beats the shit out of him, thereby informing the audience that this isn't any cutie-pie Harman-Ising adventure. Five films later, in his last appearance (*Lonesome Lenny* - 1946), Screwy is killed at the end of the cartoon, holding the appropriate Avery sign in his hands: "Sad ending, isn't it?"

Tex Avery's MGM cartoons were established by the fine work of several top animators who worked with him during his peak years there. These included many ex-Disney men, such as Don & Ray Patterson and Michael Lah, (who co-directed some of the later films); Ed Love, a stylist whose wild animation of facial expressions or "takes" were major highlights of many cartoons; and Preston Blair, who still remains famous for his animation of the sexy "Red."

Avery took advantage of the U.P.A. styling in the 50's, but his cartoons were as fast and as funny as ever. *Billy Boy* (1954) and *Cellbound* (1955) are two of the classics from this period.

In 1954, Tex returned to Walter Lantz's studio, this time as a full-fledged, reknowned director. Lantz wanted Avery to do something with the newly created Chilly Willy, and Avery did. He produced two very funny cartoons with Chilly playing the Droopy role, in competition with his adversaries. One of the films, *The Legend of Rock-A-Bye Point* (1955) was nominated for the Oscar. Two other cartoons, *Crazy Mixed Up Pop* and *Sh-h-h-h* bore Avery's distinct trademarks, but unfortunately they were his last theatrial efforts.

Avery spent the next twenty-odd years at a small commercial studio known as Cascade Productions which was perhaps the most stable and satisfying job of his career. He enjoyed the relaxed pace of the small outfit and preferred putting his creative energies into the selling of toothpaste (Pepsodent), corn chips (The Frito Bandito) and bug spray (Raid). His career came around full circle, when he was given the task of directing new commercials for Kool-Aid featuring Bugs Bunny.

In the 70's cartoon and film buffs who grew up watching his classic cartoons on television caused a resurgence of his popularity with retrospectives of his films at museums and film societies. Avery was finally recognized as a genuine innovator. In 1975 *Tex Avery, King Of Cartoons* by Joe Adamson was published by Popular Library. This book is an excellent tribute to a man whose place in animation history cannot be denied. Shortly before his death, Avery returned to the entertainment cartoon as an advisor and trouble shooter for Hanna-Barbera's Saturday morning animation factory.

The work of Tex Avery was wild, way-out and often inspired. His kind of humor has all but disappeared and he will be sorely missed. ■

Nocturnal Heir

by John Warner

Just to keep things straight from the beginning,this short article concerns itself with Charles Vess, particularly the fine illustrations he creates (of which, hopefully, there are examples on this very page). However, as is my wont, I will make a few digressions along the way.

(Also, beware of the title—it has been mined with a pun!)

* * * *

For an illustrator whose work so often dances with the macabre, Charles is genuinely one of the most genial, easy-going people I have met in some time. He exudes a quiet enthusiasm for what he does and his eyes glow whenever he talks about his worlds. His art shows this glow. There is little true grimness in his images, even when they are shadowy, cob-webby or sombre. His images aren't constricting, arthritic or grasping. They draw you out, taking your eyes not to the ground but to the distant vistas, with perhaps the promise of other, more exotic lands beyond.

It is important to understand this "pied piper" quality in Charles' art and to get a sense of what I mean when I talk of the element of seduction in artwork. Art in general, uses two main approaches (although they are not mutually exclusive and can be used quite effectively in tandem, this is more often achieved in film)—one is shock and the other is seduction. Art which shocks invades your world, quite without your permission, and shakes you. Seductive art, instead, invites you in. It lures you like a siren or a pan-goat and clouds your mind. It makes you a part of its world

Charles Vess uses a number of elements to this end. For me, though, there is a primary agent of this quality in his style. I know what it is, but I don't know why it achieves what it achieves. I will refer to it as Charles' Muse.

I felt the effects of the Muse from nearly the first piece he showed me, but I couldn't put my finger on it. When I finally did, it was quite profound. Again, I don't know why. The Muse of Ray Bradbury profoundly affected me when, as a twelve-year-old, I read Something Wicked This Way Comes by the silvery light of dawn each day before school. To this day I don't know why.

The first thing I noticed as I looked through Charles' work was its sweep. Distant horizons, large skies filled with puffy, billowy clouds, or steeple-tower mountain tops drawing you up into the mists. Sometimes those mists are drawn low over grassy fields washed in ghostly moonglow, but even here there is a feeling of vista, or depth in this case, looking through layers of lightened fog to the distant black forests. Yet, other times, these skies will be stark and black with shimmering stars winking from a lonely long distance away.

Photo courtesy of Sean Smith

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Then I noticed another curious yet unifying aspect. It could hardly be the Muse and, in fact, at the time seemed little more than a footnote in my observations. It's as if the composition in all of Charles' artwork was based on french curves. If you don't know what french curves are (it's possible), they are those many twisting, curling, coiling lengths of plastic used by draftsmen to lay down mathematically consistent and predictable curves of any form. I am not in the least trying to suggest that Charles uses french curves to map out his composition, which I would seriously doubt. Still, it's an apt if crude metaphor.

As I continued to look more and more at Charles' art, I realized that this french-curve-composition was more than a trivial detail. It adds to the whole effect of dimension and sweep. It creates interlocking planes of movement which, like the mobius strip (the mathmatical puzzle, not the French comic), defines more space and movement in the sweep of an eye than should be possible. Great winged serpents rear up while describing generous downward arcs with their long necks. Mists whip around like frenzied ghosts and settle upon lattices of interlocking branches. Charles' visions are not static. Your eyes do not settle comfortably upon any one detail. It's like aesthetic vertigo.

It was about then that I hit upon the Muse, this elusive seducer. I had almost considered it to be this motion, but I realized that there was even something more basic, more essential underlying that.

Air

Air?

Yes, air.

I must reiterate that these are my own intuitions and introspections. You might get a very different answer from Charles himself. I don't know. But there are certain qualities that we refer to as elemental. There are distinct feelings associated with something being earthy, fiery, watery or airy. These associations can even extend to such things as color, form and line. For this reason, many artists have used elemental themes stylisticly in their work. Some mix. Waterhouse, for instance, used both earth and water in tandem. Some use many elements interchangably throughout their work. And some are thematically attuned to one particular element.

Charles' art is elemental, and that element, prevalent in almost all his work to date, is air. Look! In the densest, most night-blackened foliage, leaves stir. Or, if the branches are twisted and bare, they bend and wag and one nearly hears the creaking of their joints. His clouds do not hang in the sky, they roll past in great billows. His fog does not sit, laden, but drifts, streaking along the edges of mountain peaks. This Muse, these winds finger your hair and carry your eyes and your senses through a magical world, floating, lightly. Streams of air rush playfully around you and—as I've said—seduce you.

Air is a powerful elemental field. Winds have been known to drive people mad. Certain shamans will tell you that winds are the great feminine powers. Other cultures call them jinns, or devils. Not Charles' winds. These are gentle winds, in even the most inclimate realms. But they are night winds and shadowy winds, whispering of unknown things and forgotten legacies—secrets that Charles shares with us, but only a discreet little at a time.

* * * *

Charles' universe is by no means simplistic (though it is simple in the idiomatic sense of that word which is rarely used any more). I by no means wish to say that this elemental quality neatly sums up all of Charles Vess. It is, however, that one thing that struck me most deeply, most emotionally.

Charles' vision is infinitely expanding. I could have as easily devoted this many words to one single illustration as to the whole body of his work. As I said at the beginning, the artwork itself speaks more eloquently than I.

I just remember the wind that blew in both the lightning-rod salesman and that October storm that followed Ray Bradbury opened new worlds to my twelve-year-old conciousness. Charles Vess, these many years later, has filled many of them. □

"Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid..."
Raymond Chandler

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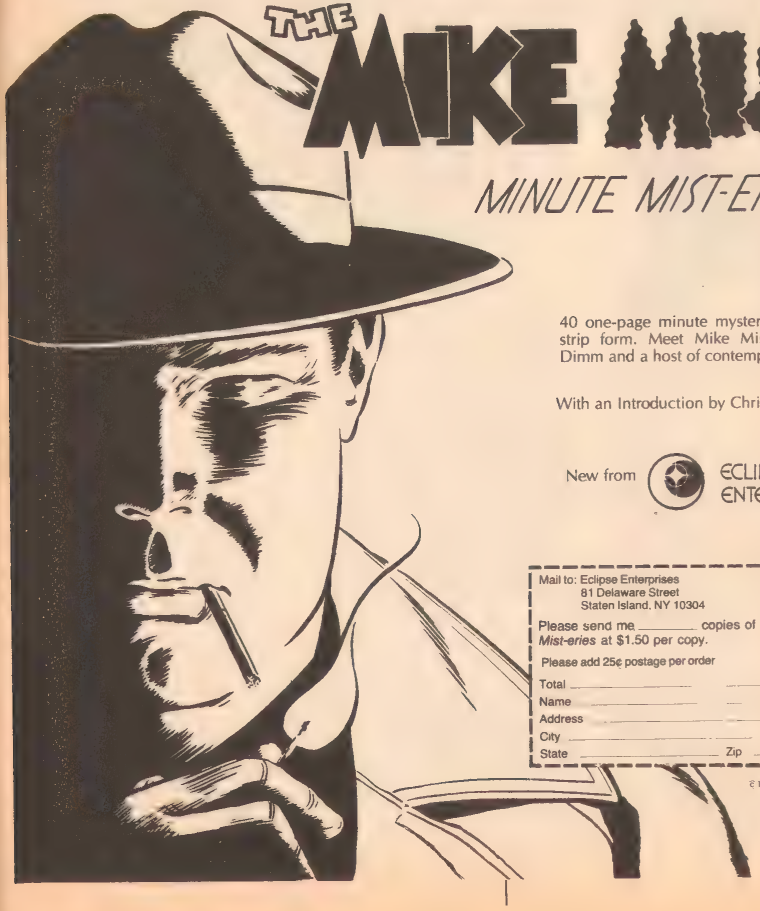

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A STUDY IN DIGNITY
by **C.J. Henderson**

Hollywood has always been interested in the tormented soul. The tragic, but noble, figure; the misunderstood loner; these have always been grist for the never-ending movie mill. The tone of this type of film always rings pretty much the same. The basic plot is usually structured around a central character, switching back and forth between his suffering and his nobility.

Lon Chaney showed us this in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Karloff gave us the same feeling as we watch him in *Frankenstein*. Both movies were more than mere 'monster flicks,' although they were only treated as such. Both transcend their genre, reaching out to show us tortured souls; simple, basically peaceful creatures, who if they had been left alone by circumstance, would have led quiet lives, affecting little. Of course, this does not make for successful cinema, and so, such pictures are rarely made. A noble nature can not triumph if there is nothing to triumph over. There must be a directing action to keep things moving. There must be some sort of conflict, some motivation that keeps us watching, all the while drawing us deeper into the anguish of that central figure on the screen. In *The Bird Man of Alcatraz*, *King Kong* and *Rebel Without A Cause* it was injustice and brutality. The story of John Merrick is no different.

John Merrick was an Englishman. He lived in London in the late 1800s. His story is similar to the others because of his deformity, a twisting and distorting of his limbs and general appearance which garnered him the title of "The Elephant Man."

The play based on Merrick's life, presently running on Broadway, which has gathered much critical acclaim to itself, should not be confused with the movie. Seeing the one is not the same as seeing the other. They are about the same person, but they are completely different interpretations. The pain is still there; the loneliness and fear which made up a great percentage of Merrick's life are still intact, but in the film, we see his affliction. His physical ugliness is shown in full detail. It is there to mirror the hate, the mistrust, the lack of understanding which surrounded him throughout his life. Throughout his life, that is, until he met a surgeon, Frederick Treves.

The film opens at their first meeting. The scene is a carnival sideshow, being closed by the local constables. Treves (Anthony Hopkins) happens to be there. He slips into the sideshow, intent on discovering what is generating all the commotion. It is, of course, the Elephant Man. Treves arranges an interview with the carnival owner, a vicious man named Bytes (Freddie Jones). Bytes agrees to allow Treves a private showing. This showing is conducted before a group of doctors in a lecture hall of the London Pathological Society. It is a piece of showmanship. Treves coldly displays the nude Merrick (John Hurt) as his discovery. The show over, Treves accepts his applause and sends the subject on his way.

This would have ended the relationship between the two men, but fate returns Merrick to the hospital. Bytes has beaten him in a drunken rage, injuring Merrick severely. From this point, Treves begins to think of Merrick as a man, and proceeds to help him. He soon finds Merrick to be very articulate and sensitive. Following this discovery, Treves provides Merrick with private rooms, better clothing and food and he fights with an insensitive board of directors, and a parade of English society, all curious to see the Elephant Man.

While the gentry pays visits by day, a hospital night porter parades the local tavern's patrons through Merrick's rooms after hours for the right price.

The film shows no shame as it points out the obvious comparisons. Treves wants to believe he is motivated by human kindness and not personal ambition. The night porter argues that he conducts the "tours" for a few harmless laughs, and not for the money. Bytes makes the claim that he is only acting in Merrick's interest . . . "How else is he to survive?"

Like *The Birdman of Alcatraz*, this is a true story. A living man really suffered through dragging his pain-wracked body back and forth in front of penny-an-admission gawkers. He really was spat at, cursed and stoned. Treves begins to wonder if he is doing what he is doing for Merrick, or for himself. He feels that he genuinely cares, and yet, he sees his own notoriety and importance growing as more and more of the upper class come to "take tea" with "the Elephant Man."

The truth is that John Merrick did remain a freak for a paying audience. The difference was that his audience had become a more sympathetic one. The message is clear, but not heavy-handed. But, this kind of film thrives on conflict. Merrick's new-found peace, even interrupted as it is by the night porter, is not to last.

Eventually, Bytes manages to steal back his former prize attraction, taking him out of the country to a new circus in Belgium. Here, Bytes treats Merrick so cruelly that the other sideshow freaks free him and help him return to London. On his return to the city, he is soon the quarry of prankish boys, and then a mob of hostile people. The police do arrive finally and reunite Merrick with Treves and his other friends at the hospital.

The film ends with Merrick finally seeing a stage play, as he was promised earlier, and then dying in his sleep. Not able to sleep on his back like a normal man, he was forced to sleep resting his head on his knees. At the end of the film, we see Merrick in his triumph. He has escaped his enemies, found friendship, respect, and love. He has been accepted. On that night, determined to sleep on his back as other people do, he died of suffocation by dislocating his neck.

Like any good dramatization of real events, we are shown his death as another triumph. It is filmed as an acceptance of the inevitable, a letting go of this torturous plane for a better one. In truth, Merrick merely reached for too much, and failed. He could only overcome his deformity by ignoring it. He could be articulate, witty, and intelligent, but he could not become a 'normal' human being. To this day there is no cure for the affliction which twisted and bent Merrick's frame. The point of the film is that Merrick knew there was nothing he could do about his own body and its problems. He *knew* he could not sleep on his back. But he had to try. Even though he was well aware that what he was doing would most likely kill him, he had to try.

And with Merrick's death, the cycle of the film is completed. "The Elephant Man" starts as an imbecile, a pathetic and broken creature, riddled with disease. By the end, he has conquered Victorian England's social strata, has been accepted by 'normal' people as a man, and has known friendship and love. *The Elephant Man* is a tragedy in the classic sense of the word. John Merrick's opponent, his disease, is unstoppable. It is the one thing he can not beat. As Oedipus could not escape his preordained fate, neither could John Merrick.

Filmed in black and white, Brooksfilm's *The Elephant Man* is a shockingly powerful film. The facts of Merrick's life are terribly muddled (i.e., the carnival owner was a generally pleasant man, there were no beatings, no kidnappings, et cetera). Historic inaccuracy has never stopped filmmakers in the past though, and it hasn't here. What we see on the screen may not be a true documentary of John Merrick's life, but it is a serious, emotional drama which takes full advantage of a moving script and a fine cast.

John Hurt is magnificent as "the Elephant Man." Buried under pounds of foam latex, distorting his shape until nothing human is left, Hurt still manages to give a tremendously compassionate performance as the twisted, but noble, John Merrick.

Hurt, becoming more and more visible to the public (*Midnight Express*, *Alien*, and PBS's *Crime and Punishment*) is just beginning to break free of the supporting character mold into the area of leads. He is doing it very well. More than a central figure, he is the entire film. Anthony Hopkins and Sir John Gielgud both render excellent performances. But they are only on the screen to contrast with Hurt's subdued and stunning display. This is not to intimate that Hopkins, Gielgud, or any of the others in the cast do not do their best—because there are no bad performances in the film.

The Elephant Man is a study in human dignity. It is also a wonder of restraint. Even with the liberties taken with the facts of Merrick's life, director David Lynch is still to be credited with not sensationalizing the violence. He does not draw attention to fists and blood, instead he chose to focus on Merrick's mental suffering, and the bearing which he managed to maintain throughout it. This is quite an achievement for Lynch, considering that his only previous film is the bizarre *Eraserhead*.

The film leads us to believe that there were a number of physical attacks in addition to the mental indignities. Victorian England being what it was, there is no written proof of such beatings. There are records of John Merrick's life, however. In the British Museum, there is a paper reputedly written by Merrick himself, telling why he became the Elephant Man.

The only way he could make money was by exhibiting himself. He got his name not (as many people think) because he suffered from elephantiasis, but because he had an enlarged, misshapen head with a distended frontal bone which almost closed one eye and had a trunk-like appearance. Neurofibromatosis gave him many folds of excess skin and an evil-smelling sac of flesh that looked like cauliflower hanging from his back.

Obviously, this would not make the make-up artist's job any easier. Christopher Tucker (*Edward VII*, *Jenny*, *The Boys From Brazil*) was called in for the job.

When Tucker began his work, he found his job had been made relatively easier in that Treves had photographed the Elephant Man to show his deformities from head to toe. They showed that not only was his head almost twice its normal size, but his right arm and hand were so disfigured as to appear like a large club. His feet were almost unrecognizable as such.

Things would have still been difficult for Tucker, but he was in luck. He found that when Merrick died, a cast was taken of his head and shoulders. The cast, together with the Elephant Man's cruelly twisted skeleton, is the property of the London Hospital.

As soon as he accepted the job, Tucker got permission to borrow the cast. "I thought I'd make a copy of it for the film," he recalls, "but when I got it into my studio and had a good look at it, I decided it was just too complicated. It would have needed major facial surgery (a hammer and chisel job) on John Hurt, to remove bits of his jaw and cheekbone. Merrick's face was completely asymetrical, the jaw was twisted and deformed in such a way that I'd have had to cut away a normal face to reproduce it. Apart from being a bit tough on John, it would have set the picture back a few years while he recovered from all the operations."

For Tucker, the major concern was to make the Elephant Man's face look sad, rather than horrific. He began by asking Hurt to shave all the hair from his head, so that he could take a cast on which to build the character. This done, he set about making a prototype, section by section. This way he could work out how to split the head into its various component parts. There were 14 components from the neck upward.

After that, it was a matter of assembling the head on the new cast modelling the rest of the face and all the features, and then splitting it up and doing one section at a time. All the molds had to be duplicated, so that Chris had at least three copies of each, plus the original. "This was to guarantee continuity," he explained, "because the complications don't end once you have made the molds. You don't just fill 'em up, take 'em out and there they are, perfect. There are so many things that can go wrong. If you get little air bubbles in the wrong place, it's back to the drawing board. And the cycling time is nearly 24 hours, from the time I actually start filling up the molds until I can take them out and begin again, if necessary."

All the bits and pieces that John Hurt wears as the Elephant Man are made of foam latex, designed to conform to Chris Tucker's own formula, to ensure that it was hypersoft. He also designed some special teeth that pushed the mouth sideways and made the upper jaw stick out. Once the make-up was created however, it took 6 hours a day to apply, and 3 hours to take it off.

Hurt could only work every other day. The ordeal of his make-up and being forced to take his meals through a straw was too much for a day after day shooting schedule. It was worth the wait.

The Elephant Man is a film which looks like a classic from the forties. it is a quiet, prideful movie. It does not bellow its message. It presents it quietly and evenly, seeming to move slowly because of its staid pacing and lack of violent action. In fact, a great deal takes place in the film from its opening to its conclusion. Modern audiences have grown so accustomed to rapid cutting, car chases, fist fights and other speed-oriented gimmicks, that a well-paced film such as this one can almost seem awkward until one begins to follow it. The black and white stock, moodily shot in England, runs the full scale of greydation: some scenes blacking to the point of obscurity; others, whiting out in the opposite direction.

The Elephant Man is an excellent movie. There is always room for another *Animal House*, or *Battle Beyond the Stars*, et cetera, but these films will not last. They will not stay with us forever, the way *Casablanca* or *Frankenstein* does. There is a certain tributary of cinema which embraces the loners, the misfits and the misshapen to its breast. There is little difference between the death of Ratso Rizzo (Dustin Hoffman) in *Midnight Cowboy* and Fred C. Dobbs (Humphrey Bogart) in *High Sierra*. Both of these social outcasts tragically die as they reach for the one thing they always knew they would never be able to attain.

John Hurt's death at the end of *The Elephant Man* is no different. It has only helped to fashion another fine film in the tradition of film tragedies.

It shall endure. ■

THE JAMES BURNS MEDIA REPORT

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Above: "One of the living masters of the cinema", Akira Kurosawa chats with the executive producer of **Kagemusha**, Francis Ford Coppola and George Lucas. Below: The Warlord's son watches his soldiers charge in the climatic battle scene

"As executive producers of Akira Kurosawa's **Kagemusha** (**The Shadow Warrior**), we wish to express our pride in being associated with this unique and masterful motion picture," beam Francis Ford Coppola (**The Godfather** saga, **Apocalypse Now**) and George Lucas (**American Graffiti, Star Wars**). "Our respect for the film and the filmmaker is unbounded."

Akira Kurosawa's (**The Seven Samurai, Yojimbo, Dersu Uzala**) 27th film, **Kagemusha**, details an awesome feudal conflict in 16th-centruy Japan. It's the costliest production ever undertaken in Japan and represents the first time that distribution rights have been pre-sold to a major Hollywood studio (20th Century Fox).

Actor Tatsuya Nakadai, who worked with Kurosawa in **Yojimbo** (later remade by Sergio Leone as **A Fistful of Dollars**), **Sanjuro**, and **High and Low**, portrays the dual role of Shingen Takeda, a powerful warlord, and an identical thief. When Shingen realizes that he is dying from combat wounds, he saves the thief from the gallows and calls upon him to impersonate the ruler, fearing that news of his demise might encourage his family's enemies to attack.

"I had to play both roles with absolutely the same make-up and costumes," Nakadai explains. "That was very difficult because Mr. Kurosawa would not permit me to enter into each character from the outside by means of the way one walked, for example, but insisted that it be done from the inside. Compared to the other parts I've done for Mr. Kurosawa, this time he wanted a more internalized interpretation, acting that was simultaneously naturalistic and complex, whereas in **Sanjuro** and **Yojimbo** he was more concerned with movement."

Many weeks were spent filming **Kagemusha**'s climatic battle scenes on the Yuhara Plain in Hokkaido. The warlord's samurai "...go toward death as if it were a kind of festival," says Kurosawa. "These men were Buddhists. They believed in the existence of another world. If their life here below was worthy and admirable, they could go to Paradise. Through their choice of clothing, their armor, and their helmets decorated with thorns, they expressed their sensitivity to beauty—their aspiration to a life after death.

"I don't wish to give the impression that war is beautiful. That's an extremely dangerous attitude. When I shot the battle scenes (using three cameras simultaneously), I concentrated on making them as realistic as possible. But out of that horror—weirdly enough and absolutely involuntarily on my part—a beauty emerged; a terrible beauty."

"Akira Kurosawa is one of the living masters of the cinema," comment Coppola and Lucas. "Most great directors have one classic by which they are known, but Kurosawa has many."

★ ☆ ★

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From **The Awakening**. L-R: Charlton Heston and Stephanie Zimbalist explore the tomb of Queen Kara. Is it alive? Charlton Heston is about to find out. A more subdued Heston and Zimbalist examine the mummy unearthed from the cursed tomb

United Artists' major Christmas release, MGM's **The Formula**, is centered around the proven fact that a vital part of the formula for the manufacture of synthetic fuel disappeared at the end of World War II and, in spite of today's gasoline crunch, still remains hidden. The film's origins date back to 1975 when producer-writer Steve Shagan was at the U.S. Mission Documentation Center in Zehlendorf, Germany, researching the Nuremberg trials for his screenplay of **Voyage of the Damned** (later nominated for an Academy Award), and he stumbled onto facts involving the missing synthetic fuel formula. Shagan immediately began work on a story utilizing the mystery. Two years later, during another national energy crisis, MGM offered Steve a firm motion picture deal for **The Formula** while William Morrow secured the story's novel rights. The novel has been on the best seller list for the past several weeks.

The movie stars George C. Scott as Barney Caine, a rugged L.A. cop determined to solve the murder of a former police official friend. His investigation leads him from Beverly Hills to deep into the Nazi past and finally to Checkpoint Charlie, the tense corridor that separates East and West Berlin. During his journey, Lieutenant Caine encounters Adam Steiffel (Marlon Brando), an eccentric member of an international oil cartel, and is befriended by Lisa Spangler (Marthe Keller), a German fashion model.

Director John Avildsen (an Academy Award winner for **Rocky**), evenly divided filming between Southern California and various German locations. Avildsen insisted on using realistic backgrounds whenever possible. Consequently, not a single scene in **The Formula** was filmed on a sound stage.

★ ☆ ★

"I turned down **The Omen**, which has a similar theme," says Charlton Heston of his latest film, **The Awakening**, "and I think it's fortunate that I did, because Greg Peck was quite marvelous in the part. But I found this story more interesting and there is the added challenge of playing an Englishman."

Robert H. Solo's (**Invasion of the Body Snatchers**) production of Mike Newell's (NBC **The Man in the Iron Mask**) **The Awakening**, concerns the discovery by Professor Matthew Corbeck (Heston) of the ancient Egyptian tomb of Queen Kara, who vowed to "return from the grave." Trouble ensues when Corbeck's daughter (Stephanie Zimbalist) falls prey to the Queen's promise of reincarnation.

"In 1972 I visited the Tutankhamun Exhibiton at the British Museum and witnessed the queues outside for months on end," producer Solo recalls. "A year or two later I saw the Rameses II Exhibition in Paris at 10:30 on a Sunday morning—the place was packed. I realized that things Egyptian have a tremendous appeal for people all over the world. When I was fortunate enough to come across Bram Stoker's (**Dracula**) **The Jewel of the Seven Stars**, I knew it could be turned into this kind of film: **The Awakening** combines intelligence, fear and *fun*."

★ ☆ ★

©1980 MGM

A wizened Marlon Brando portrays Adem Steiffel, an eccentric American oil tycoon in Steve Shagan's and John Avildsen's **The Formula**

©1980 MGM

Police detective Barney Caine (George C. Scott) enlists the help of a German model (Marthe Keller) to track down his friend's murder in this scene from **The Formula**

"**Ordinary People**'s theme was a difficult subject to tackle," says Robert Redford, "and I felt that that was the right way for me to begin as a director. It has a lot of colors. It has to do with the family unit and people who keep their lives in perfect order—that interests me. It's about the effort to communicate by a young person through the fog of the social structure in which he is raised. **Ordinary People** is about behavior, about something of depth. It would have been easy to make a film filled with car chases and the obvious commercial gimmicks, but I saw no value in that. I thought it best to start with something which might be difficult, but which was tied to elements I felt strongly about."

Does Redford care to comment on his "directorial style?"

"I had to give one of the best performances of my life," Redford laughs. "I had to walk around the set like I knew what I was doing! If I wasn't certain what to do next, I'd just look very thoughtful and authoritative. In order words, I faked it!"

★ ☆ ★

Paramount Pictures is seriously considering releasing a re-edited version of **Star Trek—The Motion Picture**. Scenes would be shortened (like Kirk's and Scotty's space pod tour of the Enterprise's exterior), and deleted sequences (like Spock's crying on the bridge and coverage of the crew's aliens) would be reinstated. Even if Paramount *doesn't* rerelease **STTMP**, word has it that when ABC airs the film, the network will make some of the mentioned changes.

★ ☆ ★

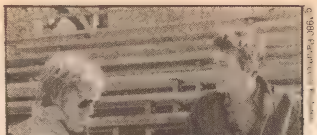
Neal Adams is working on preproduction designs for a PBS presentation of Joe Haldeman's award-winning SF novel, **The Forever War**

★ ☆ ★

The latest James Bond adventure, **For Your Eyes Only**, should wrap up production by January. One United Artists spokesman feels that is's unlikely that the picture will be ready for release by the summer. If **For Your Eyes Only** is distributed next December, it will be the first Christmas 007 release since **The Man With the Golden Gun**.

★ ☆ ★

The title of MGM's production of John Varley's **Air Raid** (reported on last issue), has been changed to **Millenium**.



© 1980 Paramount Pictures

Robert Redford discusses a scene from **Ordinary People** (based on the Judith Guest novel) with 19 year old star Timothy Hutton

© 1980 Paramount Pictures

Unsure of how to adapt to the world after a suicide attempt, Hutton tries to communicate with his mother (Mary Tyler Moore) From **Ordinary People**

★ ☆ ★

"I never want people to feel that they have watched a movie," says director Micheal Cimino (**Thunderbolt and Lightfoot, The Deer Hunter**), "but rather that they have been somewhere. One of the ways that you accomplish that is by paying attention to detail. In my latest film, **Heaven's Gate**, every article of clothing, every structure, and every sign is based on a photograph of the period."

Cimino's multi-million dollar **Heaven's Gate** (some industry insiders place its budget at close to $40 million), is an epic western starring Kris Kristofferson, John Hurt, Christopher Walken, Jeff Bridges, and Isabelle Huppert. The film is based on the conflict in the 1890's between foreign Wyoming settlers and cattle barons. That struggle finally erupts into a spectacular bloodbath pitting the settlers against the cattle owners' mercenary army.

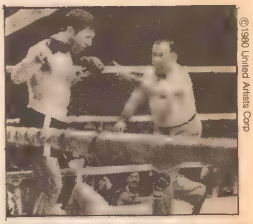
To achieve the realism that Cimino mentioned, the director took nearly two years (including 156 shooting days) to make **Heaven's Gate**. Micheal even stayed six months on location in Kalispell, Montana, where he spent $14 million and employed over 2,500 citizens as extras.

"If you don't get it right, what's the point?" says Cimino in defense of **Heaven's Gate**'s expenditures. "At one time, when certain parts of films were unsatisfactory, directors could go back and reshoot. We no longer have that kind of option.

"Most of what we shoot is on location," Micheal told **American Film**. "It's often done under difficult circumstances and there's no going back. There is no reconstructing sets and getting actors back together. We certainly don't want to be sitting in a cutting room a year after shooting is completed and wishing, 'If I had only gotten this or that.' By then it's too late."

© 1980 United Artists Corp

Is it possible to achieve cinematic "realism" with $40 million? Director Michael Cimino is attempting to make an epic western with his new film, **Heaven's Gate**



© 1980 United Artists Corp

Robert De Niro as young Jake La Motta, Middleweight Champion of the World from Martin Scorsese's **Raging Bull**. *(Right)*

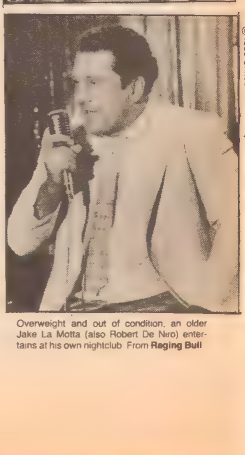
Audiences can judge if Micheal Cimino's steadfast dedication was merited later this month when United Artists distributes **Heaven's Gate** nationally.

★ ☆ ★

Gene Kelly has been signed by Francis Ford Coppola's Zoetrope Studios to oversee Zoetrope's musical division as well as produce and direct the films in conjunction with Coppola. Songwriter Tom Waits is composing the music for Kelly's first project, a movie entitled **One From the Heart** which is being directed by Coppola.

★ ☆ ★

Regardless of the potential quality of Martin Scorcese's **Raging Bull** (the film tells the story of former middleweight champion Jake La Motta) it *will* contain an incredible transformation on celluloid. Robert De Niro had no problem portraying the fighter in his prime, but to show La Motta in his latter years, the actor gained close to *sixty pounds*. ■



© 1980 United Artists Corp

Overweight and out of condition, an older Jake La Motta (also Robert De Niro) entertains at his own nightclub From **Raging Bull**

Pleasure Dome
HELLO, I'M MR. XANADU, YOUR HOST AT PLEASURE DOME. THERE ARE TWO "PLEASURE DOMES" THIS YEAR. WRITE ME FOR DATES AND DETAILS.*
HAHAHAHAHA
XANADU
EVERY SPRING AND FALL WE PRESENT
Pleasure Dome
THE FUN CONVENTION
2 WEST FIFTH STREET
WILMINGTON DE 19801
302 - 652 - 5098
GUESTS
COMICS FOR SALE
FILMS
A REGULAR TBG ADVERTISER
©1980 XANADU C&C, INC.
XANADU
COMICS AND COLLECTABLES INC.
PRESENTS
Pleasure Dome
THE FUN CONVENTION
*FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEND S.A.S.E. MARKED "PLEASURE DOME 81."

Children of the Stars

©CVESS

Chapter Two: Answers

I HAVE SENSED YOUR SUMMONS AND COME WITH ANSWERS TO YOUR QUEST! I KNOW OF YOUR PARENTS WELL AND OF THE FATE THAT BEFELL THEM!
GREAT WAS THEIR POWER AND PURE WERE THEIR HEARTS. FOR YEARS THEY OPPOSED THE WILL OF THE GREAT DEMON LORDS TILL THE MIGHTIEST OF THESE, LORD NIZENTHOR, THRU TREACHERY AND DECEIT HAD THEM AND ALL THEIR KIN DESTROYED!
HE IS ONE OF THE DEMON LORDS I AM SURE OF IT!
I MUST WARN DAME MELINOR ...

5.

ONLY TWO ESCAPED! THEY WERE CHILDREN, HEIRS TO THAT KINGDOM! TILL NOW THE DEMON LORDS HAVE SEARCHED FOR THOSE TWO...
BUT THIS DAY I, LORD NIZENTHOR HAVE FOUND THEM!
NO!

6.

MURDERER! KINSLAYER! WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH US?
I MUST DESTROY YOU!
BUT FINAR HAS REACHED DAME MELINOR WITH HIS NEWS AND SWIFTER THAN THE WIND SHE FLIES TO THEIR AID...
TO LAND BEFORE THE DEMON LORD, CALLING OUT HER DEFIANCE!
YOU WILL NOT HARM THOSE TWO, LORD NIZENTHOR! I WILL NOT HAVE IT!
WITCH-WOMAN YOU ARE A FOOL! YOU HAVE NOT THE POWER TO STOP ME!

7.

8.
TO BE CONTINUED...

Close Up:

by Mark Gasper

Two different pre-production **Thundarr** studies. On the left is the more refined animation studio style and on the right is an example of Kirby's and Alcala a original style.

What do Steve Gerber, Jack Kirby and Alex Toth have in common? They're all emigrants from the established comic book companies who have found the same home in a related field. On October 4th at 10:30 AM (Eastern Standard Time) on the ABC television network, a rather different Saturday morning cartoon show, *Thundarr the Barbarian* premiered. *Thundarr* is a science fiction/fantasy cartoon series, the co-creation of Steve Gerber and Joe Ruby for Ruby-Spears Productions.

Set in a barbaric future Earth, Thundarr (en ex-slave), Princess Ariel and Ookla the Mok (a part wolf, part ape, part human mutation who communicates in a mixture of grunts and growls which sound like, "a 7 year old imitating a dog") battle against the evil wizards who want to enslave mankind and rule the world. Their world evolved because of a freak accident, in which a stray or "rogue" planet passed between the Earth and the Moon, narrowly avoiding a collision with the Earth. As a result of this abrupt disaster, a new world inhabited by Serpent Men, Lizard Kings, Sandsharks and other strange mutations developed. The change also precipitated the emergence of magic forces which have been harnessed and manipulated by evil wizards. These wizards have combined the remains of Earth's technological past with these magic forces to fire their drive to enslave the entire planet.

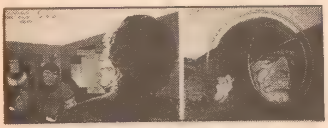
Most of the humans in Thundarr's world have regressed back to prehistoric times and live in caves, trees and the ruins of cities. A few men live under the sorcerers' iron hand in the mysterious, futuristic citadels. Thundarr is born into slavery in Tantaros, the kingdom ruled by the wizard Sabian. Eventually Thundarr, along with Ookla (who is also a Tantaros slave) leads a rebellion against Sabian, testing his raw, brutish, Conan-like strength against the wizard's sorcery and command of "ancient" technology. Sabian's step daughter Princess Ariel, gives Thundarr, the magical Sunsword (a lightning sword) and joins in the struggle. After they defeat the evil wizard, the trio set out to explore the outside world and fight for freedom wherever they discover oppression.

The series revolves around the rebels explorations as they search for a weapon to use against the powerful sorcerors. As the rebels travel through this future Earth they will discover the ruins of New York City, werewolves in Washington, and the Hoover Dam turned into a holy monolith. Series co-creator Gerber (a story editor at Ruby-Spears) has scripted several episodes and other scripts have been written by Mark Evanier, Martin Pasko and Buzz Dixon. Joe Ruby is also the co-creator of the popular *Scooby-Doo* TV series.

There have been 13 *Thundarr* episodes produced by Ruby-Spears for ABC. although there are subtle continuity threads from week to week, *Thundarr*, like most televison shows, can be shown in any order.

Thundarr has won its time slot for 4 consecutive weeks as of this writing, garnering a larger audience "share" each week. A possibility exists that *Thundarr* may be expanded into a one hour show because of its early rating success. If this does happen, a new half hour feature (which may also be a barbarian series) would be added to *Thundarr* to round out the hour.

Jack Kirby (the creator/co-creator of many of the most lasting characters in comic books including Captain America, The Fantastic Four and Thor) is responsible for the overall production design of *Thundarr*. He designed most of the show's settings, sketched most of the supporting characters, all of the show's weaponry and visualized its villians. Although Gerber's comic book work (creator of Howard the Duck and a major Marvel Comics writer during the 1970's) was markedly different in style and intent from Kirby's, the pair collaborated quite closely on the creation of a few of the show's villians. Gerber comments, "I am completely in awe of him. He is truly a remarkable talent who is now vastly underrated by fandom. He has a totally visual mind, I have never seen anyone who can match him in comics or in any other visual medi-



© 1980 Hanna Barbera Productions Inc.

Clockwise: 2 studies of Gemini, one character that retains much of Kirby's original mood and visual concept. A design for a post-holocaust background: Ookla the Mok smashes a Wizard "tool."

Thundarr

um. What Gene Colan can do manipulating facial expressions and body postures, Jack can do with inanimate objects and machines. Jack is unparalleled as a designer of costuming and setting (mise-en-scene). His depiction of the heroic figure has become a classic in its own time."

Alex Toth (*Zorro*, *Hot Wheels* and the writer/artist of *Bravo for Adventure*) did the original major character designs for the series. These designs were later modified by Kirby and by the studio artists responsible for the show's final animation.

To sell the series to the networks, Alfredo Alcala was commisioned to ink some of Kirby's early sketches. According to Gerber, Alcala's inking is the "...best inking on Kirby since Joe Sinnott. We asked Alfredo to use a different style than the one he's so famous for from *The Savage Sword of Conan* and he did a magnificent job. The inking style is vastly simplified from Alfredo's other work. It retains Alcala's distinctive characteristics without his usual line rendering in order to keep Kirby's power."

Although Kirby's original drawings had to be adapted to the "limited animation process" (double printing 12 drawings for each 24 frame second of film time), Kirby's original conceptions are apparent in the final product. Gerber readily admits that, "we had to make compromises to get the show on the air."

Ruby-Spears developed the *Thundarr* series through the storyboard process where as Gerber says, "The writer loses control once the script is sent to the animators." The actual animation and shooting of *Thundarr* was done by a studio in Korea, which also prevented any input after the scripting stage.

The story board artists, John Dorman and Hank Tucker are fans of the early Marvel Comics. They were very pleased to be working with Jack Kirby who was directly responsible for many of those early stories.

Network restrictions were a major stumbling block for *Thundarr* because of its barbaric setting. It was a difficult problem to fulfill the recently formulated requirements for Saturday morning TV without destroying the savage ambience and mood so important to this type of series. "I found myself the primary advocate of the obligatory fight and action scenes which had become such a cliche at Marvel," Gerber continues, "The difficulty with the Saturday morning show was to make the Broadcast Standards and Practices division of the network accept any conflict at all, much less a physical conflict. The studio felt it was necessary to include fight and action scenes in order to properly capture the spirit of the barbaric setting."

The production of a series of this nature involves a long process of disagreements and compromises. The selection of the voice of *Thundarr* was one example of this process, "Joe Ruby and I were hearing Conan; the network was hearing Tarzan. Eventually the network chose the voice actor who does Tarzan's voice for the Filmation series to do the voice of Thundarr. Their impulse is always to go with the familiar especially with a series as different as this one is in so many other ways."

Thundarr's final form is not precisely what either Gerber or Ruby-Spears originally envisioned. "The limited animation process is analogous to the paper plates from which comic books are printed," Gerber muses. "The quality is never what you would like it to be. However this series probably contains as much or more full animation as any other series on television."

Despite his reservations about the final product, Gerber is optimistic about *Thundarr*. "It's a nice introduction of this kind of fantasy to kids. Without the people who worked on this series, it probably would never have gotten on the air, because it's an example of a type of fantasy that the general public is not familiar with. I think it's considerably better than what you usually find on Saturday morning."

Three of Jack Kirby's original character drawings for **Thundarr**: a front view of one of Kublai's robot warriors, and side views of a mutant mountain lion and a flying dragon. The background setting is provided by Andre Gordon.

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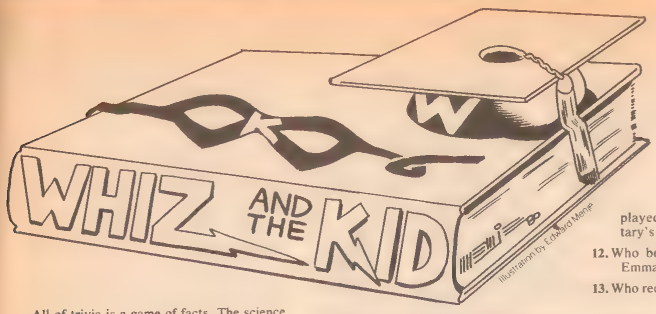

All of trivia is a game of facts. The science of investigation is also based on facts. Actually, trivia is a pasttime enjoyed by many who dabble in the art of detection. Facts out of place and facts gone awry. Anything extraordinary. All of these make for the joy and meat of a detective's work.

Today's quiz is especially for those of an investigative bent. It's all about private eyes, detectives, policemen, and just plain folks who like to dabble in the affairs of others.

(Answers on Page 82)

1. Archie Goodwin is his right hand man, orchids are his favorite flowers, and he never leaves home. Who is he?
2. What relationship is begun with these words: "How are you? You have been in Afghanistan, I percieve."?
3. *The Marcus-Nelson Murders* were what TV cop's first movie?
4. Though this nickname actually referred to the murder victim, Nick Charles became better known as . . .?
5. Who is the world's only detective/vampire?
6. What were the names of the Avenger's (Richard Benson) knife and pistol?
7. From what school did James Bond graduate?
8. Who was Sam Spade's partner in *The Maltese Falcon* before he went and got killed?
9. How many people did Mike Hammer kill in his first 5 novels?
10. Who had a secretary named Peggy Fair?
11. Richard Diamond had a secretary, but viewers only saw her legs on TV. Who played Diamond, what was his secretary's name, and who played her legs?
12. Who became John Steed's partner after Emma Peel?
13. Who recovered *The Purloined Letter*?
14. What is Commissioner MacMillan's first name?
15. His editor was Anthony Albert Vicenzo and he investigated the supernatural. Who was he?
16. What group had their headquarters at 123 Main Street in Washington, D.C.
17. Napoleon Sola and Ilya Kuryakin worked for what group?
18. In *The Heat Of The Night* what city's police department did Virgil Tibbs work for?
19. If you dial 555-2368, who will answer?
20. Ten points toughie: What is Lieutenant Columbo's first name?

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GERBER SUES MARVEL

Steve Gerber has filed a massive lawsuit with the United States District Court in Los Angeles against Cadence Industries (Marvel Comics' parent corporation), Marvel Productions Inc. and Selluloid Productions Inc. for allegedly abusing Mr. Gerber's rights as the creator of Howard the Duck. Also named as defendents were Stan Lee (as a Marvel representative), Peter Shanaberg, Morrie Eiseman and Peter Coffrin (as representatives of Selluloid Inc., a firm allegedly contacted by Marvel to produce a live-action Howard the Duck motion picture or TV show).

The suit (which is in excess of $10 million) contends that Gerber created Howard the Duck for Marvel as an independent contractor and as such has a claim to the material created by him. By virtue of an implied contract between Marvel and Mr. Gerber, Gerber did not relinquish all control of the Howard the Duck character, but only gave Marvel the right to publish Howard the Duck comic book stories.

Gerber's complaint argues that Marvel has violated this implied contract by using the character in licensing projects and other media (TV, radio, movies, etc.) without Mr. Gerber's consent while also preventing Mr. Gerber from using the character in any form. Marvel has neither financially compensated Mr. Gerber for the use of Howard in media tie-ins nor has given Mr. Gerber "public credit" as the creator of Howard the Duck. This alleged breach of "confidence and trust" between Marvel and Gerber constitutes (according to the complaint) a gross copyright violation which "has severely and irreparably injured [Gerber's] public goodwill, reputation and career." The complaint asserts that by so flagrantly violating Gerber's rights as a creator, Marvel has relinquished its claim to the Howard the Duck character and that Gerber should now be recognized as the sole legal possessor of the character, the comic book stories that Gerber wrote and all rights and titles.

This case is being regarded as a landmark challenge to the present work for hire contract that the major comic book companies require artists and writers to sign before they are permitted to work for the companies. As a result of signing this contract, an artist or writer no longer has any legal claim to the material he or she created for the company, and the company is not required to give the creators compensation for the foreign reprinting of their material, for the adaptation of their material into another medium or for the licensing of their material. Also, the creators may be denied any control over what is done with the characters they created for the publishing company. By challenging Marvel's claim of sole ownership of the Howard the Duck character, the Gerber lawsuit has the potential of altering the relationship between publisher and creative talent in the comic book industry as much as the revoking of Major League Baseball's reserve clause altered the relationship between player and owner.

The Howard the Duck lawsuit is only the second time in the short history of the American comic book industry that a comic book professional has sued a major comic book publisher over the legal rights to a comic book character. The only previous case on record is Jerry Siegel's and Joe Shuster's attempt to win sole possession of the legal rights to Superboy and Superman from National Comics (DC) in the late 1930's. Although Siegel and Shuster were not awarded legal possession of Superman, they did win a settlement over Superboy because of a legal clause in their contract. The clause only gave National the right of first refusal of any characters they created and National had originally decided not to exercise their option on Superboy.

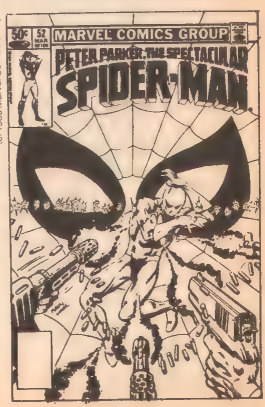
After Siegel went into the army, National then decided to use Superboy as a character because they decided that they had a legal right because Superman and Superboy were the same character. After a bitter lawsuit, National Comics settled with Siegel and Shuster out of court. For an undisclosed sum (believed to be $90,000), the pair signed away their claim to Superboy.

However, the Siegel-Shuster suit is not a direct legal precedent for this case because of the loophole clause which was not part of any agreement between Mr. Gerber and Marvel Comics. Although no response has been filed at this time, it is expected that Marvel will use the standard voucher agreement printed on the back of the checks that Mr. Gerber received for writing Howard the Duck as the basis for its claim of sole ownership. The legality of this voucher agreement has never before been tested in court and it is the court's interpretation of the binding or non-binding nature of this agreement that will decide the case.

Mr. Gerber is being represented by Henry W. Holmes Jr. from the Los Angeles firm, Davidson and Holmes. Previously Mr. Holmes represented Harlan Ellison in the celebrated **Brillo-Future Cop** copyright infringement suit from which Mr. Ellison won a substantial settlement. Both Mr. Gerber and Mr. Holmes refused to comment when contacted by **The Comic Times.**

Marvel Comics has retained the services of Cadence Industries' corporate lawyer Thea Kerman to represent them in this case. When asked to comment about Howard the Duck lawsuit, Ms. Kerman would only say that, "The matter is before the courts and in litigation and so it is not appropriate to comment at this time."

Although no court date has been scheduled, it is expected that the case will be tried in court in the middle portion of 1981.



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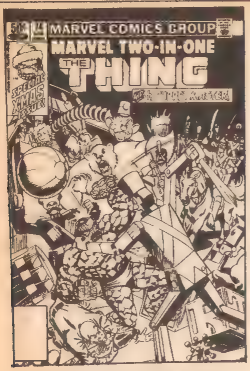

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BYRNE QUITS X-MEN

John Byrne will no longer be penciling the **X-men**. His last issue will be **X-Men** 143. After a fill-in issue by Brent Anderson, Dave Cockrum will take over as the regular **X-Men** penciler with issue 145. Cockrum was the first artist assigned to the revived **X-Men** series which has been catapulted to the top of the Marvel line under the guidance of the Claremont, Byrne and Austin creative team.

Byrne's reported reason for leaving was that after more than three years he had "done all he could on the book and felt that the time had come for a change." His stated goal is to both write and draw **The Fantastic Four**. Since he already had been awarded that book's writing assignment, he apparently felt that the time was right for him to make a move. **Fantastic Four** editor Jim Sallicrup has reportedly agreed to Byrne's proposal. Regular **FF** penciler Bill Sienkiewicz will leave the book and concentrate on getting ahead of schedule on his other regular assignment: **Moon Knight**.

Contrary to rumors floating about, Chris Claremont will remain as the writer on the **X-Men**. When asked about his reaction to Byrne's departure Claremont said that, "I wish it hadn't become necessary." There will be a subtle shift in the direction of the **X-Men** as Claremont intends to clear up the Star Jammer saga. Since new X-Men artist Dave Cockrum is not as enthusiastic about the Hellfire Club storyline as John Byrne was, it is unlikely that there will be any new stories featuring those characters in the immediate future. Also, since Alpha Flight was primarily created by John Byrne, Claremont feels "uneasy" about using those characters, since Byrne may want to use them in his **FF** stories. Such a move would include downplaying the implied romance between Wolverine and Snowbird. Claremont expects that Night Crawler will figure more prominently in future issues because, "he's one of Dave's favorites."

When asked if the last minute editorial decision that decreed that Phoenix must die (**X-Men** 138) had played a part in Byrne's departure, Claremont replied, "I don't think so. I think John felt that it was time for a change." Claremont did add however that the timing of the editorial decree "had dampened his enthusiasm a little."

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It is not known at this time if Terry Austin will follow Byrne and move to the **FF** or will stay with **The X-Men**.

The **X-Men** album book may be affected by Byrne's move as he reportedly does not want to work on the album book, "because he feels guilty since he's not on (the regular book)." However Byrne's departure will not have any effect on the **X-Men** prose novel being written by Chris Claremont.

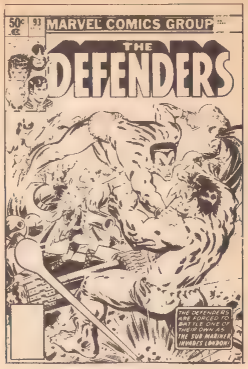
FANFARE SHELVED

Instead of continuing with plans for **Marvel Fanfare**, a proposed newsstand comic book aimed at recapturing the spirit of the early Marvel Bullpen Pages, Marvel will devote its energies to **Marvel Showcase** which will perform the same function. **Showcase**'s interior art will be printed on 50 lb. coated stock (which is the standard comic book cover stock.) The book will contain 32 pages of editorial material with no advertisements, will not be governed by the Comics Code and will probably cost $1.00.

Al Milgrom remains at the editorial helm and all of the material originally prepared for **Fanfare** will be used in **Showcase**. Some of the material that is destined to appear in **Showcase** is: a 2 part Spider-Man/X-Men teamup written by Chris Claremont and penciled by Michael Golden (Part 1) and Dave Cockrum (Part 2) and a Dr. Strange story also written by Claremont with pencils by Marshall Rogers and inks by P. Craig Russell.

Marvel's other flagship book, **Marvel Universe** will resemble **Epic Illustrated** except that all of its material will be in color. At this point no material has been prepared for the book although editors Lynn Graeme and Ralph Macchio have reached a number of verbal commitments.

Neal Adams has submitted a number of package designs for **Universe** and Marvel's upcoming line of trade paperbacks. One of Adams' proposed packages will definitely be used for **Marvel Universe**.



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EPIC NEWS

Based upon extremely positive early sales reports on its second issue, **Epic Illustrated** has been promoted to bi-monthly status. Mary Jo Duffy has been reassigned to serve as Archie Goodwin's assistant. Jack Abel has been named to replace Ms. Duffy when she vacates her present position as Al Milgrom's assistant editor.

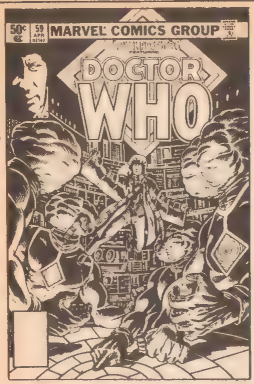
The cover for **Epic** 5 (which is currently scheduled for February) will be a painting by the Brothers Hildebrant. Featured inside will be the final part of Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad's full color adaptation of Robert E. Howard's **Almuric**, Chapters VIII & IX of Jim Starlin's **Metamorphosis Odyssey** (color), "Jack Tales" by Charles Vess, an interview with the Brothers Hildebrandt, "Because It's There" by Ralph Macchio and Joe Jusko (color), "Conquest of the Banana Planet" by Rick Veitch, "Rising of the Moon" by Bill Mantlo and Polly Law (color), "Flight Out" by Pepe Moreno and "Fantasies" by Mirko Ilic.

Upcoming **Epic** projects include an adaptation of Larry Niven's **There's A Wolf in My Time Machine** by SF illustrator Jack Gaughn, **Life Hutch**: a second Earth-Kyba war story by Harlan Ellison & Ken Steacy, a continuing series by **Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy and a** possible cover and/or interior work by Barry Windsor Smith. Neal Adams is preparing a painting for the cover of **Epic** 6.

MARVEL ALBUM NOTES

The 2 part Angel Dust story rejected by the Comics Code Authority will definitely appear as a Marvel Album book. It is not yet certain if the story (Written by Roger Mckenzie, penciled by Frank Miller and inked by Klaus Janson) will be printed in another, cheaper format.

The Walt Simonson graphic novel mentioned last issue will be an updating of **Star Slammers**, a work which he originally prepared for a college art course before he broke into comics. Jim Shooter describes the storyline as "avant garde", very entertaining and something that could not be done in the regular Marvel line.



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MAGAZINE NEWS

The second **Bizarre Adventures** book has been shelved because it potentially competes with **Epic Illustrated.**

The new backup series in **The Hulk** will be "Paradigm" by Steve Bissette. "Paradigm" will focus on one woman's journey back through time in pursuit of her past. The series is currently scheduled for 6 issues although there is a possibility that it may continue.

SUBS ON THE RISE

The Marvel subscription lists are at a record high according to Jim Shooter. The book with the highest number of subscriptions is **Spider-Man** which has "over 40,000 subscriptions." Traditionally subscriptions have accounted for an extremely low percentage of comic book sales. Possible reasons for this new trend is the increasingly spotty newsstand distribution that comics receive and Marvel's discount subscription campaign.

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MARVEL ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL PROPOSED

One project currently under consideration at Marvel is a trade paperback book that will tell the origin of Marvel Comics in comic book form. Editor-in-chief Jim Shooter commented that such a project, "would have to be written by Stan Lee, because who else could tell the story of Marvel Comics?" Although it is generally agreed that this book would *not* resemble Stan Lee's **Origins of Marvel Comics** series, the format of this proposed all-new material book is still unclear. One proposal calls for structuring the book around a roast of the **Fantastic Four**, like the Dean Martin TV roasts. The book will probably describe in comic book form how Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko created Marvel Comics.

Other projected celebrations of Marvel's 20th anniversary include a one month event that will occur in *all* of Marvel's titles (probably in September) where there will be a remembrance of Marvel's humble beginnings and a special, premium, larger-sized 20th anniversary issue of the **Fantastic Four**.

MOKF 100: SPECIAL EDITION

To celebrate **Master of Kung Fu**'s outliving of the Kung Fu craze which initially spawned the series, issue 100 (actually the 86th Shang-Chi story) will be a double-sized issue. Planned is a 3 part story in which the first 2 parts are set in the 30's and prominently feature the characters from Sax Rohmer's novels. The final part of the story will involve the results of Fu Manchu's devious manipulations in the 30's 50 years later in the present. Part 3 will focus on Shang-Chi and the series' regular characters as they battle a menace set in motion by Fu Manchu 50 years ago. The story is written by Doug Moench, penciled by Mike Zeck and inked by Gene Day.

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UPDATE: CRAZY

Crazy Super Special 73 will have a larger original format than its predecessors as it will contain 32 pages of original material instead of 16. One of the more intriguing stories in this issue will be an R rated version of *Fin Fang Foom*.

Upcoming in **Crazy** 72 will be "The Alphabestiary" by Larry Hama and Ralph Reese, "Farewell My Sweet Retro Rockets," an SF Chandleresque photo novella by Mark Bilgray and Michael Sullivan, a Baby Hulk contest, "Teen Hulk," by Jim Osley and Marie Severin, a **Shogun** parody by Murad Gumen and Kent Gamble, Obnoxio the Clown and "Behemouth Jack" by David Allikas and David Morris.

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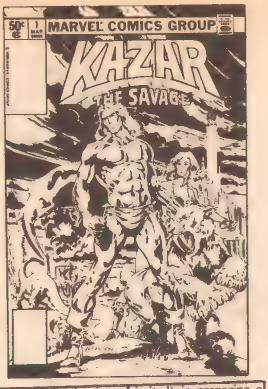

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CAPTAIN AMERICA FIGHTS FOR ENERGY

Marvel Comics has allowed the Department of Energy to use Captain America as a symbol for its Youth Energy Conservation Program. The program is intended to make America's school children conscious of energy conservation.

The program was launched on October 1st at a party hostessed by First Lady Rosalynn Carter and her daughter Amy. The Marvel Entertainment Group was welcomed by many public dignitaries including several members of Congress.

The Captain America Youth Energy Conservation Program is a multi-media effort which is being co-sponsored by Marvel and the Campbell Soup Company. Marvel's animation studio (Marvel Productions Limited) is preparing a fully animated 30 second television spot and 10, 20 and 30 second radio spots in which the Red, White and Blue Avenger will explain how children can contribute to energy conservation. It is also possible that a movie short will be produced to carry this public service message to movie theatres.

Another aspect of this campaign is the production of an educational, one-shot comic book which will be distributed to children through the public school system. **Captain America and the Campbell Kids** features "Captain America Versus the Energy Drainers" as he struggles against the Cold Air Crook, Thermal Thief, Wattage Waster and The Doomsday Man to show the Campbell Kids how to save energy. Written by Bill Mantlo, the promotional comic was drawn by Alan Kupperberg, Herb Trimpe and Dan Green.

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Departing First Lady Rosalynn Carter and daughter Amy at a reception launching the Captain America Youth Energy Conservation Program. The people posing with the Carters look familiar but we're not sure if they're who we think they are

NOTES

Bill Mantlo, Gene Colan and Dan Green are the regular **Avengers** creative team . . . . A script has been completed for the **Howard the Duck** radio show . . . . Jim Starlin's **Metamorphosis Odyssey** series in **Epic** is slated to run between 12 and 15 chapters . . . . Frank Miller, in addition to both writing and drawing **Daredevil**, is penciling **Dr. Strange** beginning with issue 48. Two fill-in issues are being prepared to ease the transition as Gene Colan leaves for the Avengers by Mike Golden and P. Craig Russell and by Kerry Gammill and Al Milgrom . . . . Tom Palmer is the permanent **Star Trek** inker . . . . **Marvel Two in One** 75 will be a double-sized issue featuring a teamup of the Thing and the Avengers by Tom Defalco and Alan Kupperberg . . . . A script has been prepared for a Broadway musical version of **Captain America** . . . . Roger Stern and John Byrne have left **Captain America**. Chris Claremont will be the books regular writer with issue 258 . . . . Wendy Pini, Walt Simonson and Tom Palmer assisted Dan Green on inking a Gene Colan penciled **Dr. Strange** story . . . . Jack Abel is penciling an **Iron Man** story . . . . **The Superman Versus Spider-Man Treasury** book has been delayed until the Spring. The book will now cost $2.50 because of an increase in the price of paper . . . . All of **Captain America** 255 will be shot directly from John Byrne's pencils except for a one page epilogue. The reasoning behind this move is that, except for the epilogue (which is set in the present), the entire story occurs in the past and reproducing directly from the pencils will give the story an "antique" touch . . . . Both the **Benny Hill** and **Dennis the Menace** projects are in "legal limbo." The material prepared for the **Benny Hill** one shot will be slightly altered and used in **Crazy** . . . . Mike Barr is writing a story for **What If** based on the premise "What If Captain America Became President?" . . . . **Tales of Asgard** will begin as a backup series in **Thor** 304. Each story will be interconnected and will feature events in Asgard occurring concurrently with **Thor**'s lead story . . . . The **Elric** Graphic Novel by Roy Thomas and P. Craig Russell is pre-selling very well . . . . The regular **Star Wars** creative team will be David Michelinie, Walt Simonson and Tom Palmer . . . . Mark DeMatteis has written a fill-in **Avengers** story . . . . Mary Jo Duffy has prepared a Millie the Model bible for a possible TV series. A Kid Colt bible is also in the works. Millie the Model will also probably appear as a one shot in **Marvel Spotlight** or **Marvel Premiere** . . . . The print run of **Dazzler** 1 has been increased. Marvel has received orders in excess of 400,00 which will make it one of the best selling comic books in recent history . . . . The next Marvel movie adaptation will either be **Raiders of the Lost Arc** which is directed by Stephen Spielberg and is being produced by George Lucas (June release date) or Ralph Bakshi's **American Pop** (February release date) . . . . Jim Starlin's **Captain Marvel** book will probably be the first of Marvel's "Graphic Novels" to appear . . . . **Man-Thing** 10 will feature a return of John Kowalski, the main character from Claremont's **War Is Hell** series . . . . . ■

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SWAMP THING MOVIE

Michael Uslan and Ben Melnicker (the producers of the upcoming **Batman** movie) announced the signing of Wes Craven to write and direct a live action Swamp Thing feature length film for Polygram and Universal Pictures. Craven's past credit include **The Hills Have Eyes**, **Last House on the Left** and the NBC TV production of **Stranger in Our House**.

According to Uslan, **Swamp Thing** will be faithful to the first 10 issues of the award-winning comic book by Len Wein and Berni Wrightson. It is not known at this time if either Wrightson, Wein or former **Swamp Thing** editor Joe Orlando, will participate in this project or receive screen credit.

Shooting is scheduled to commence March 1, 1981 on location in the southeastern United States. The producers are aiming for a worldwide release at the end of next summer and a US debut next Halloween.

THOMAS BEGINS DC CANON

Now comfortably entrenched at DC, Roy Thomas has accepted 3 regular assignments and is also working on a number of fill-ins and special projects. In addition to a new World War II version of **All-Star Comics** (edited by Len Wein), Thomas will be writing **Batman** and a new Sword & Sorcery book for Dick Giordano.

To help fill in DC's schedule, he will also be writing 3 issues of **DC Comics Presents**, a Hawkgirl/Superman teamup plotted by Jim Starlin and a 2 part story, plotted by Gerry Conway that teams Superman with the original Captain Marvel and the Marvel Family. Thomas is also scripting 2 issues of **Green Lantern** from regular writer Marv Wolfman's plots.

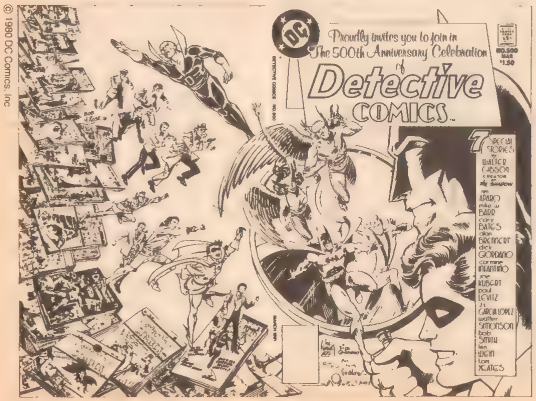
WHITNEY ELLSWORTH 1909-1980

Whitney Ellsworth passed away Sunday, October 5, 1980 at his Westlake Village, California home at the age of 71.

Mr. Ellsworth began his career as an artist after studying at the Brooklyn, New York YMCA cartoon course. Among the strips that he worked on at King Features Syndicate were **Tillie the Toiler**, **Dumb Dora** and **Embarrassing Moments**. He worked as a feature writer and as a cartoonist for the **Newark Star Eagle** and **Newark Ledger** newspapers in New Jersey from 1931 through 1934.

Ellsworth wrote fiction for the pulp magazines from 1936 to 1939. During that period he entered the comic book field as a co-editor for Major Wheeler-Nicholson. He became Editorial Director of DC Comics in 1939 and held that post until 1953, when he left to produce the world-famous **Superman** television show of the 1950's.

In addition to his role as Editorial Director, Ellsworth scripted the **Superman** newspaper strip (daily and Sunday) through World War II



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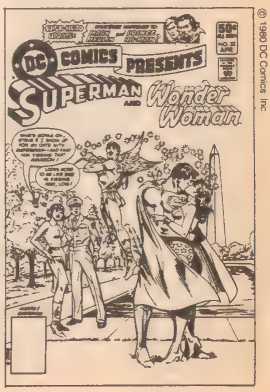

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and many of the **Superman** radio programs of the 1940's. He also scripted the **Batman** newspaper strip from 1966 through 1970. He retired from DC in 1970.

Whitney Ellsworth is survived by his wife, the former Jane Dewey, and a daughter, Patricia Wilson.

SUCCESS BREEDS MORE MINI-SERIES

The Phantom Zone, the story of the **El Family** of Krypton and **Tales of the Green Lantern Corps** are 3 new mini-series currently in the planning stages. The first 2 series will be timed with the release of **Superman II** (Spring 1981) and are calculated to serve as movie spin-off books. The **El Family** will concentrate on a study of Superman's ancestors on Krypton, before that world exploded. In-depth secrets of **The Phantom Zone** and the Kryptonian prisoners who inhabit that limbo-like void will be revealed in this mini-series. No creative staffs have yet been assigned.

Tales of the Green Lantern Corps will focus upon the untold secrets of the interplanetary corps. Marv Wolfman, who scripts the regular **Green Lantern** book, will plot the 3 issue series with Len Wein scripting. Although no interior artists have been assigned, Brian Bolland has been commissioned to draw all 3 covers. The first issue of the monthly **Tales of the Green Lantern Corps** will debut in February.

The Madame Xanadu mini-series is still not scheduled.

BACKUP NEWS

Robert Kanaigher and John Severin are preparing at least 2 Enemy Ace stories as a backup feature in **Unknown Soldier**. The first story will appear in issue 251. At the moment, editor Len Wein plans to introduce two regular backup series in the book beginning with issue 254. Planned is a revival of the Blackhawks, set in World War II (by Marv Wolfman and Dave Cockrum) and Captain Fear (by Walt Simonson).

In future issues, the back pages of **DC Comics Presents** will reveal Whatever Happened To....Mark Merlin and Prince Ra-Man (by Michael Tiefenbacher and Alex Saviuk) and Star Hawkins (also by Tiefenbacher). Jim Starlin and Paul Levitz are working on a story that will expand the Whatever Happened To....? backup in a Superman/Starman book-length teamup entitled "Whatever Happened To Starman?"

Len Wein and Dan Spiegle are working on 2 Bat Lash stories that are slated to appear in the back up slot in **Jonah Hex**. It has not yet been decided if Bat Lash will continue as a regular feature.

Bob Rozakis is the creator of a new **Superman** backup feature, **Superman: The In-Between Years**. The series is designed to explore Clark Kent's college years. It is set after Clark Kent left Smallville and before he joined the Daily Planet staff. "Superman: The In-Between Years" will premiere in issue 339.

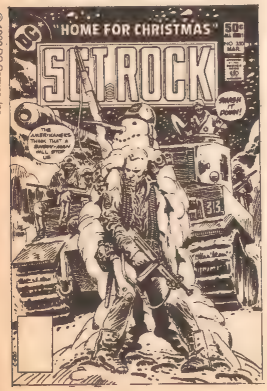
A Commissioner Gordon solo story entitled "Whodunnit?" by Bob Rozakis, Joe Staton and Frank McLaughlin is slated for **Batman** 334. That issue also features "Tales of the Gotham City" with Jason Bard by Mike W. Barr and Dan Spiegle.

A Plastic Man story written by Martin Pasko and drawn by Joe Staton and Bob Smith will appear in **Super-Friends** 43.

SPECIAL REPRINTS

Awarded as the "Best of DC 1980" are: "The Miraculous Return of Jonathan Kent" (*Superman*) by Cary Bates, Curt Swan and Frank Chiaramonte; "Tales of Gotham City" by Jack C. Harris and Dan Spiegle; "Happy Birthday, Dear Joker" (*Batman*) by Len Wein, Walt Simonson and Dick Giordano; "Brief Encounter" by David Vern, Trevor Von Eeden and Carl Potts; "The Man Who Was The World" (Superman/Deadman teamup from *DC Comics Presents*) by Wein and Jose Luis Garcia Lopez; "A Bridge Called Charlie" (*Sgt. Rock*) by Robert Kanaigher and Redondo; "Star Light, Star Bright" (*Legion of Super-Heroes*) by Paul Levitz, Lopez and Giordano; "Vow of a Samurai" (*Jonah Hex*) by Michael Fleisher and Tony DeZuniga; "Bruce the Barbarian" (*Superman*) by Mark DeMatteis and Vitacan and "The Secret World of Jonathan Kent" (*Superman*) by Bates, Swan and Chiaramonte. These stories will appear in the digest, **Best of DC** 11.

DC Special 8 spotlights **The Legion of Super-Heroes**. Included are 3 stories from 1968 by Jim Shooter, Curt Swan and George Klein and 2 tales from the 70's by Cary Bates and Dave Cockrum.



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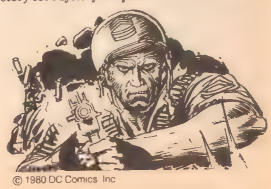
NOTES

Jim Starlin is plotting a Superman teamup with Hawkgirl for **DC Comics Presents**. Roy Thomas will be scripting that issue....Other upcoming Superman teamups include Captain Marvel, The Shazam Family, Wonder Woman, Plastic Man and the Flash....Romeo Tanghal and Vince Colletta are the new **Super Friends** art team....Brian Bolland has drawn two **Justice League** covers....Rich Buckler will fill-in for regular **JLA** penciler George Pérez in issues 188 through 190....Batman teams with Lois Lane in **Brave & the Bold** 175, scripted by Paul Kupperberg....The Demon will be appearing in an upcoming issue of **Wonder Woman**....Newcomer Bud Simmons has scripted a Green Arrow story for **World's Finest** 268....Larry Malstead is now inking the Adam Strange backup series....The Earth-2 Joker will face The Huntress in an upcoming story....Martin Pasko is writing a Swamp Thing/Batman teamup for **Brave & The Bold**....**Detective** 503 will sport a Jim Starlin cover....Don Heck is both penciling and inking the **Aquaman** backup in **Action Comics**....The Justice League's first villain, Starro the Conqueror (from **JLA** 1) returns after a 188 issue absence, in a story written by Gerry Conway....Joe Orlando and Michael Fleisher are preparing a 64 page tabloid magazine which will be the official DC magazine tie-in to the **Superman II** movie. There will be no program sold in the movie theatres....A Plastic Man story written by Martin Pasko and drawn by Joe Staton and Bob Smith will appear in **Super Friends** 43.... In **Wonder Woman** 278 Paul Levitz, Joe Staton and Steve Mitchell introduce a new Huntress villain, Lionmane....**Flash** 300 will be a double-sized issue. The story, written by Cary Bates, will begin with Barry Allen waking up in a hospital room, after being burned by a lightning-induced chemical fire, realizing that his Flash adventures had all been a dream.... Tom Yeates and Rick Veitch are preparing a story for **Mystery in Space**.... ■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THE INDEPENDENTS

©1980 Howard Cruse

In "Billy Goes Out" Howard Cruz pictures the lonely side of gay life. From **Gay Comix** 1

As part of its 10th anniversary celebration, Kitchen Sink is currently planning 4 new books and has recently released 2 others. Upcoming in future months from Kitchen Sink are **Snarf 9**, **Crystal Night**, **Nard & Pat** 2 and **Dope Comix 4**.

Snarf 9 ($1.50) sports a Leslie Carbarga front cover (on special high-gloss stock), a Dennis Kitchen back cover and contributions from Robert Crumb, Kim Deitch, Howard Cruse, Joel Beck, Sharon Rudahl, J. Michael Leonard and Steve Stiles.

Crystal Night ($1.25) is a full-length science fiction story about selective breeding in the future by Sharon Rudahl.

Nard & Pat 2 (52 pages, $1.50) is a collection of Jay Lynch's popular countercultural strip. Many of the stories are gathered from obscure sources and are being reprinted for the first time. Although most of the strips are by Lynch, Gary Whitney and Pete Poplaski have assisted on some of the selections. Blues piano maestro Erwin Helfer has written an introduction for the collection.

Dope Comix 4 ($1.25) features work by Greg Irons, Tix Boxell, Michael T. Gilbert, Aline Kominsky, Steve Stiles, Gary Whitney, Dan Steffan, Phoebe Gloeckner and Valentino. Front cover by Rand Holmes and back cover by Jay Kinney.

The 2 recent Kitchen Sink releases are **The Spirit** 25 and **Gay Comix** 1. Edited by Howard Cruse, **Gay Comix** 1 "Brings the gay movement out of the closets and into the funnies." The book is an anthology of stories about gay life by lesbians, gay men and bisexual human beings. Featured are "Billy Goes Out" by Howard Cruse, "Stick in the Mud" by Lee Marrs, "Saboteur" by Kurt Erichsen, "Found a Reason" & "Fallout" by Billy Fugate, "Reunion" by Roberta Gregory, "A View From Mom" by Mary Wings and full page illustrations by Demian and Dutch artist Theo Bogart. The cover is by Rand Holmes. Priced at $1.25, this comic book may be sold only to adults.

Coming in **Spirit** 26 is the concluding chapter of *Life on Another Planet*, "Nylon Rose" (1946), "The Confessions of Monk Mallon" (1941), a Wally Wood Spirit story: "The Man in The Moon," "Umbrella Handles" (1947) and a brand new Eisner story, "The Public Interest."

©1980 Will Eisner

The Spirit uses an old Dead End kids ruse in "The Return of Autumn Mews." From **The Spirit** 25.

National Lampoon

Shary Flenniken has quit as editor of the comic features and the **Funny Pages** section. Assistant edtitor Beth Firmin has assumed the responsibility of coordinating the **Funny Pages**.

November **Lampoon** is a "Potpourri" issue, showcasing work that did not fit in recent theme issues. Gahan Wilson contributes a 4 page strip entitled "Junk Food." Also featured are "Thunderchicken", a 6 page color strip by Joe Schenkman and 2 pages by Robert Mankoff titled "Presenting a Collection of Cartoons by Robert Mankoff for Which We Couldn't Think Up a Title, Neither Can You." Represented in the **Funny Pages** are Charlie Rodrigues (with "The Biography of the Roman Empire"), Ralph Reese ("Racquet-ball"), Mary Wilshire (**Hilary**), Bobby London (Dirty Duck writes to Ms. Lonely-hearts for advice), M.K. Brown, Ron Barrett, Gahan Wilson and B.K. Taylor.

©1980 National Lampoon

The theme for the December issue is "Fun." Featured will be "There Is No Fun" by Gahan Wilson, "Fun Tatoos" by Shary Flenniken (in which she draws X-rated tatoos on photographs) and two pieces by Ron Barrett: "Family Fun on a Budget and "Sophisticated Fun." Included in the **Funny Pages** will be Ralph Reese ("Young Moderns"), Gerry Capelle ("Love Story"), Mary Wilshire ("Singing Telegram"), Charlie Rodrigues and Rick Geary.

Since the **Lampoon** still has "a million" **Funny Pages** buttons we were asked to plug them. Well, consider them plugged.

HEAVY METAL

The serialization of Richard Corben's adaptation of Robert E. Howard's novel **Bloodstar** begins in the December **Heavy Metal**. The lengthy story will appear in 12 installments. Also featured in the December issue will be "Double Evasion" by Moebius, the beginning of a new strip by Godard and Ribera "What's Reality, Papa?" (which uses characters from their previous strip, "the Alchemist Prank"), "Man's Best Friend" by Dick Matena, a color strip "The Cutter of the Fog" by the Shuiten Brothers, the end of "Professor Thintwhistle" by Steve Stiles and Richard Lupoff, the beginning of "Valentina", a new strip by Crepax and an interview with Crepax. This month's cover artist is Chris Achilleos and Alex Nino has prepared an illustration for the back cover.

Upcoming in future issues will be "Dance on a Razor's Edge" by P. Craig Russell, "Women" by Jeronaton (the creator of "Champikou"), "Bang, Hah" by Don Wood (January) and "Tex Arcana" by John Finley (which may begin in February).

Heavy Metal will be offering a Berni Wrightson color Tee-shirt within "2 or 3 months." The shirt will sport 2 full color Wrightson illustrations featuring characters from "Captain Sternn."

At this time **Heavy Metal** has no plans to release any more trade paperbacks, although a magazine tie-in to the **Heavy Metal** movie is a possibility. The compilations of material serialized in **Heavy Metal** apparently did not sell as well as expected.

RAW

Editors Art Spiegelman and Françoise Mouly report that **RAW** 2, "should be out sometime in December." Contents for the second issue of this new experimental magazine have not been completely finalized due to a deluge of material. Currently the editors have enough material to fill 2 issues of **RAW** and are trying to achieve an appealing balance of material for issues 2 and 3.

However some work has been definitely slated for **RAW** 2 including a full color cover by Joost Swarte ("I'll Play the Blues for You"). Mark Beyer has prepared this issue's insert in the form of bubble gum cards (complete with gum). Among the other features in **RAW** 2 will be the first chapter of Spiegelman's adaptation of the novel **Maus** (The smaller sized pages will be presented either in insert form or with 4 pages shot down to fill one tabloid-sized **RAW** page), a strip by Belgium cartoonist Ever Meulen (contributor to **Soldes** magazine) and a long text piece exploring the media's use of fiction techniques to present the news, by David Levy. The book will also spotlight strips by Gerry Capele ("Canal Street"), underground cartoonist Bill Griffith, frequent **Lampoon** contributor Rick Geary, Gary Panther (creator of **Okupant X**), Ben Katchor, Drew Friedman ("The Andy Griffith Show") and Kaz ("Vamp Dance").

Along with the regular insert feature like "Two Fisted Painters" by Spiegelman in **RAW** 1, each issue will also highlight a classic comic strip from the past. Issue 2 may focus on a strip by the French cartoonist Christophe.

Jacques Tardi ("Manhattan") has completed a 24 page story which will probably appear in **RAW**, although Spiegelman is not sure how to incorporate it into **RAW**'s strict format of shorter strips.

RAW 1 has sold out its 5000 copy print run, although a few copies ("less than expected") have been saved as back issues. The print run of **RAW** 2 will be increased to 7000.

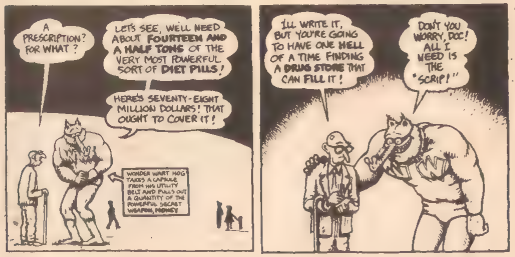
RIP OFF INC.

The most recent book in Rip Off Press' series of trade paperback reprints of popular underground strips is **Wonder Wart-Hog and the Nurds of November**. Although the artwork is somewhat reduced (to fit the books' 5½ x 8½ size) the book contains 187 pages of vintage Wonder Wart-Hog strips, printed on good white paper. Among the stories included in this volume are: "Escape From Planet Squootpeep", "Wonder Goes on Welfare", "Epidemic", "Philbert Desanex' 100,000 Dream" and of course, "The Nurds of November." In addition to the 10 featured stories, the book also reprints 2 early Wonder Wart-Hog stories from the 60's as appendices: "The Pigs of Uranus" and "Smiling Sergeant Death." Including the 2 appendices, **Wonder Wart-Hog and the Nurds of November** reprints 213 pages of material and retails for $6.95.

Also new from the Rip-Off Press is the fifth volume of Larry Gonick's **The Cartoon History of the Universe**. Entitled "Brains and Bronze", Gonick focuses on the Bronze Age in this comic, as he continues his unique history in comic book form. This 48 page comic retails for $1.25.

To order these publications directly from the publisher write: The Rip-Off Press Inc., P.O. Box 14158, San Francisco, CA 94114 and include a check or money order of $7.50 for **Wonder Wart-Hog and the Nurds of November** and $1.50 for **The Cartoon History of the Universe** to cover postage and handling.

The Helen of Troy myth as interpreted by Larry Gonick from volume 5 of **The Cartoon History of the Universe**.


A PRESCRIPTION? FOR WHAT?
LET'S SEE, WELL NEED ABOUT FOURTEEM AND A HALF TONS OF THE VERY MOST POWERFUL SORT OF DIET PILLS!
HERE'S SEVENTY-EIGHT MILLION DOLLARS! THAT OUGHT TO COVER IT!
WONDER WART-HOG TAKES A CAPSULE FROM HIS UTILITY BELT AND PULLS OUT A QUANTITY OF THE POWERFUL SECRET WEAPON, MONEY
I'LL WRITE IT, BUT YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE ONE HELL OF A TIME FINDING A DRUG STORE THAT CAN FILL IT!
DON'T YOU WORRY, DOC! ALL I NEED IS THE "SCRIP!"
©1980 Gilbert Shelton

Gilbert Shelton's Hog of Steel rushes to stop a plague of American gluttony in "Epidemic." From **The Nurds of November**

Just arrived is the third issue of Bob Boze Bell's **Honkytonk Sue**. Entitled, "Trigger to Ride" the queen of country swing reunites the Beatles, saves their lives and then converts the Fab Four to Country Western music. Priced at $1.75, **Honkytonk Sue** is the western representative in the alternative comic book market. Order from: Honkytonk Sue, 707 W. Mackenzie, Phoenix, Arizona 85013. Be sure to include 50¢ for postage and handling.

ECLIPSE ENTERPRISES

Eclipse's newest project is a collection of **The Mike Mist Minute Mist-eries** by Max Allan Collins and Terry Beatty which will be published in an underground format. The book will feature 40, six panel mysteries (one per page). The solution to each mystery is contained in the sixth panel of each mystery, which is printed upside down. Collins is currently writing the syndicated **Dick Tracy** comic strip and Beatty is a columnist in **The Buyer's Guide**. No release date has been announced.

The installment of Jim Starlin's **Metamorphosis Odyssey** now being prepared for Eclipse will be called *The Price*. This square-bound book should be published in late Spring of 1981.

Editor Dean Mullaney will be buying enough material for a few issues of **Eclipse** before publishing the first issue of that bi-monthly magazine. The regular contents of **Eclipse** are beginning to solidify. In addition to the Steve Englehart-Marshall Rogers lead feature and Don McGregor's *Ragamuffins* (the title of his "kid" series), Steve Gerber will be writing a regular series. No artist has been announced for *Ragamuffins* or the Gerber strip.

Chris Claremont and Bonnie Wilford are writing an occult gothic novelette for Eclipse which may appear as a separate book or be serialized as a regular series in **Eclipse** magazine. Marshall Rogers will be illustrating the comics novelette and reportedly he will be adding his own regular character (a sorceror) to the story.

Stewart the Rat by Steve Gerber, Gene Colan and Tom Palmer was premiered at the Thanksgiving Creation Convention in New York City. The square-bound book retails for $6.95.

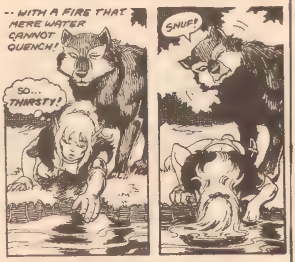
Both **Hembeck** and **Sabre** are now out of print. In addition to being distributed to the regular comic book specialty outlets, **Detectives, Inc.** is being carried in specialty mystery book stores.

WARP graphics

Just released is **Elfquest** 8, "Hands of the Symbol Maker." Cutter and Skywise continue their search for other Elfin tribes and enter a strange swamp. Battling a deadly fever, a delirious Cutter finds himself alone in the foreign land. Story by Richard and Wendy Pini, art by Wendy Pini.

Richard Pini is also preparing an **Elfquest** novel for Playboy Press. The novel (which is the first part of a projected trilogy) may appear as early as December 1981.

©1980 WaRP Graphics



A fever-ridden Skywise pauses to take a drink in a stream and is about to meet an old friend

The original cover painting for the 19th issue of 1994

©1980 Warp Publishing Co.

WARREN

There are 2 new series beginning in the Warren magazines this month. Spotlighted in **Eerie** this month is the 27 page premiere episode of Zud Kamish by Jim Stenstrum and E.R. Cruz. Beginning in **Creepy** is Cassandra St. Knight, "a female Dr. Strange-type character" by Rich Margopolous and Auraleon.

Other possibilities for future Warren series include Don McGregor's Dagger for Warren's **Rook** magazine. McGregor has written the first story, entitled "Marshmallows Don't Weep" for the proposed series. Set in the Depression, the high adventure series will feature bi-planes, Dusenberg's and other 30's set pieces. Alex Toth has been mentioned as a possible artist for Dagger.

everyman STUDIOS

Everyman Studios is a small alternative publishing house which produces **Cascade Comix Monthly**, Everyman comix and mini-comix (similar in format, but not content, to Robert Crumb's **Snatch Comics**).

Cascade Comix Monthly is a magazine concentrating on underground comix. Each issue features comix news, reviews and an interview with an underground cartoonist. Currently **Cascade** is going bi-monthly beginning with issue 22 ("Comix Monthly" will be dropped from the title). The reason for the change according to publisher Artie Romero, is that a bi-monthly schedule will allow this small company more time to produce a slicker magazine. **Cascade** 22 features an interview with Ted White and an interview with R. Diggs (a cartoonist carried by the Rip Off Features Syndicate and the creator of **Great Diggs 77** and **Great Diggs 2**). **Cascade** 23 will be an all-comix issue with work by Spain, Robert Williams, Jay Lynch, S. Clay Wilson, Dan O'Neill, Gary Whitney and others. Each issue sells for $1.00 and subscriptions are available ($5.00 for 6 issues and $10.00 for 12 issues).

There are now 19 issues in the mini-comix series, two of which (issues 1 and 3) are sold out. Comic soon will be **Mr. Fly** by Bob Conway (#20) and **Riffs** (#21) by Bruce Chrislip. All issues are 25¢ with color covers and run 8 or 12 pages. These mini-comix serve as an inexpensive showcase of new cartoonists and a wide variety of different material.

Everyman Studios has formed a new company called Oxo Films which is producing a 10 minute animated cartoon, **Leafy Wanders in Space**. Three characters from Everyman comics will appear in the film: Leafy Wanders, Aftie Stick and the Platinum Toad. The cartoon is a group effort by the staff at Everyman Studios and is being nursed along to insure the highest possible quality. There is a possibility that Oxo will produce more cartoons once this initial project is completed.

For a free catalogue or to order **Cascade** and other Everyman publications write to: Everyman Studios, 432 S. Cascade Avenue, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80903. Be sure to include a signed statement of age with your order.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM PRESS

This month's **Cerebus** is entitled "Mind Games." "Mind Games" is a journey through the aardvark's mind as his body lays comatose from a will-sapping drug. The story, written and drawn by Dave Sim is a radical departure from traditional comic book storytelling values. Also in this issue is another installment of "The Aardvarkian Age" by Michael Loubert.

Galaxy Media just released **Near Myths** 5. **Near Myths** is published in Scotland and is regarded as one of Britain's foremost alternative comics. Issue 5 features "Large Cow Comix" by popular British cartoonist Hunt Emerson, "Song of the Sleepers" by Trina Robbins, 3 chapters from "The Adventures of Luther Arkwright" a 150 page epic created by Bryan Talbot, "The Checkmate Man" a time assassin story by Grant Morrison, "Tales From the Edge" by Graham Manley, "Thiranin" by Tony O'Donnell, the conclusion of Rob Norman's "Elder Gods" and "Private Eye" by Alan Hunter. Priced at $2.25 **Near Myths** 5 is 65 pages and sports a color cover. Also available are **Near Myths** 1–4 (1–3 are $1.50@ and issue 4 is $1.95). **Near Myths** is distributed in this country by Bud Plant.

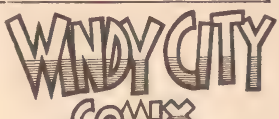
Recently released from Fantaco is Fred Hembeck's fourth book, **Bah, Hembeck. Bah Hembeck** is magazine size and contains 24 pages of all new material on white paper.

Fantaco is now publishing one book a month. Their December release is **Alien Encounters**, a collection of Flying Saucer stories by S.R. Bisette, Howard Cruse, Tom Yeates, Fred Hembeck, George Erhling, Rudy Nebres, Steve Stiles, Tim Boxell, Rich Larson and Mike Zeck. This 32 page comic sports a front cover painting by George Chastain and a Tom Sutton illustration on the back cover.

Future Fantaco releases include **Smilin' Ed Comics** 3 (January) a horror issue, **60's Funnies** (February), a one shot movie magazine special **Splatter Films** (March) and **Smilin' Ed Comics** 4 (April). All of these books retail for $1.25 and may be ordered from Fantaco, 21 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12210.

On November 8th, the Museum of Cartoon Art held its 4th annual Benefit Gala. The theme of the evening was the 55th "birthday" of **Little Orphan Annie** and the major attraction was a preview of the **Little Orphan Annie** exhibit. Columbia Pictures (which is producing an upcoming **Little Orphan Annie** feature film) **sponsored the $50.00 a plate fund raiser.**

The exhibit will officially open to the public on Sunday, November 16 and will continue until January 31, 1981.



New from the publisher of **Windy City Comix** is **Joint Effort** by Valentino and Gary Whitney. The 2 major features are a **Jackrabbit and Elvin the Swine** story ("Discuss the Draft") and "Basket Case" (a unique close encounter of the third kind). Also in this issue are 3 short one page vignettes concerning man's psychological battle with the clock ("Wastin' Time"), an indictment of the hypocrisy in "rejecting" the drug culture ("Drugs") and an amusing look at the clash between nature and society's mores ("No Place to Go"). The 12 page book costs $1.00 (postpaid).

Still available from Pisces Son Studios is **Windy City Comix** 1–3 by Gary Whitney. **Windy City** 1 & 2 which are both 8 pages long, retail for 50¢ each (postpaid) and issue 3 is priced at $1.00 (also postpaid). The publisher is offering a "special bargain pack" in which all 4 books may be obtained for $2.50. Orders should be sent to: Pisces Son Studios-Dept Ct, PO Box 3506, Merchandise Mart Station, Chicago, IL 60654. All checks should be made payable to Gary Whitney.

NEW MEDIA

Before the publication of even one issue of the projects announced last issue, New Media has expanded its comic book commentary line. James Van Hise has sold 3 magazines, **RBCC**, **Enterprise Incidents** and **Fantastic Exploits** to New Media. Van Hise will continue to edit these publications although he will now be working for New Media.

All 3 magazines will be typeset and will be published on a regular quarterly schedule. The release dates of the magazines will be staggered so that one magazine will appear each month. **Enterprise Incidents** (which has been completed) should be released in November, with **RBCC** following in December and **Fantastic Exploits** in January.

New Media also announced that a new title **Fantasy Empire**, edited by Don & Maggie Thompson is being prepared. The 84 page, $1.25 periodical will focus on British fantasy elements like **DR. WHO**, rock and folk songs, **The Prisoner** and the Tolkien trilogy.

And....

Marv Wolfman's Dracula prose novel will not be published by New Media/Irjax. Evidently problems between Gay Brewer and New Media/Irjax caused Brewer to take the material to Fantagraphics Inc. It is possible that the story, a teamup of Dracula and Jack the Ripper, will be presented in comics form after all, although no final decision has been made. The project has been temporarily halted, awaiting the preparation of contracts suitable to both parties. Paul Gulacy has prepared a number of illustrations to accompany the as yet unwritten prose novel.

* * *

Just out is **Magical Blend**, a magazine of synergy. The magazine contains original comics, poetry and photography. The first issue features comics by Justin Green and Van Horn, articles by Michael Moorcock and Dane Rhudyar and a piece by Jomaro on money magic.

* * *

In **Cartoonist Profiles** 47 Dave Graue talks about drawing the daily **Alley Oop** strip. Other articles include a celebration of the 50th anniversary of **Blondie**, an examination of animation pioneer Paul Terry, and the founder of Rocky Mt. School of Art details how to draw the human head. **Cartoonist Profiles** is an oversized, 80 page magazine and retails for $4.00.

* * *

Also premiering is **Comedy** 1, a magazine devoted to the study of comedy. Inside the first issue is an article on Harvey Kurtzman's **Help! magazine** ("Help! I'm a **Prisoner of the** Future") by Larry Hama, "Fast Takes" by Jim Backus (the voice of Mr. Magoo), "Howard the Duck" by Steve Simels, a look at the Chuck Barris hit, **The Gong Show** and an interview with Sid Caesar about the early days of television. **Comedy** 1 is 64 pages and sells for $3.00.

* * *

Just published is a reprint edition of **The Kin-Der-Kids** by Lyonel Feiniger. Feininger's work is similar to Windso McCay's **Little Nemo** in its imaginative approach. Only 31 episodes of this Sunday strip appeared between April 29, 1906 and November 18, 1906. The complete run is reproduced in full color in a 10 x 14, 32 page book retailing for $6.00

* * *

Recently published are paperback reprints of popular comic strips, **Hagar the Horrible** and **Mandrake the Magician**. **Hagar the Horrible** 1 reprints the very first **Hagar** strips by Dik Browne and **Mandrake the Magician** features 2 adventures from 1976 by Lee Falk and Fred Fredericks. Both books sell for $1.25.

* * *

Mindrot 18 is devoted to "The Cinema of Osamu Tezuka." Osamu Tezuka is a renowned Japanese animator who revolutionized the genre in the late 40's. This 5 x 8, 28 page, black and white book is priced at $2.00.

* * *

Marshall Rogers is currently preparing a **Batman Portfolio** which will be published by Sal Quartucchio. The 4 full color plates will be enclosed in an illustrated envelope and will cost $10.00. A signed and numbered, limited edition of this portfolio will be available for $15.00.

* * *

Upcoming from Walt Disney Productions are 6 slim, hardcover books that will reprint individual stories from the hardcover books. Three of these new volumes will contain work by Carl Barks: **Donald Duck Story 1, Donald Duck Story** 2 and **Uncle Scrooge Story**. The other three volumes will be **Mickey Mouse Story 1, Mickey Mouse Story 2** and **Goofy Story**. The 7x 10 books will contain from 28 to 40 pages, be in full color and retail for $3.95 each.

* *

The eleventh issue of **Capt. Canuck** contains a story, "Chariots of Fire" in which an alien race erases the memory of everyone in Quebec. Also in this issue is chapter 3 of "Beyond."

* * *

The 1981 Fandom Calendar was recently released by Smile in the Dark Productions. This year's installment sports black and white illustrations by Rich Bruning, Alan Hanley, Willie Blyberg, Timothy Fuller, Bob Vojtko, Hanther, Gary Kwapisz, Rich Howell, Earl Geier, Mitchell O'Connell, Brenda Mings, Mahlon L. Fawcett and Bret Blevins. Dennis Fujitake is represented by a full color illustration on the front cover and the color back cover is by Tom Fisher. The calendar is decorated throughout by selected excerpts from such diverse sources as **The Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers, Pogo** and **Peanuts**. Editor Ward O. Batty also cites important birthdays, anniversaries, movie premieres and book publications with a decided bent towards a comic fans interest. Among these items are Harold Robbins' birthday (May 21, 1912), the first appearance of Bugs Bunny (August 10, 1938) and the first appearance of **The Justice League of America** (November 21, 1960). **The Fandom Calendar** is priced at $2.95 and may be ordered from Smile in the Dark Productions, 944 Austin Avenue NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30307. •

The October 22, issue of *Variety* carried the following item entitled, "Me? I'm Not Crazy" in its Literati section:

"Fantasy writer Michael Fleisher has filed a damage suit in US District Court of New York asking a total of $2,000,000 in damages from defendants Fantagraphics, a Stamford, Conn. publisher, Gary G. Groth, a director of Fantagraphics and a California writer Harlan Ellison. Plaintiff charges in an interview with Ellison in a periodical, *The Comics Journal*, published by Fantagraphics, and conducted by Groth, he was defamed in that the two men portrayed him as being insane, lunatic, incompetent and crazy."

When contacted by *The Comic Times* neither Mr. Ellison or Mr. Groth would comment on the suit although Mr. Groth did note that he had not been served yet, due perhaps to the backlog in the New York Courts. Mr. Fleisher was unavailable for comment.

It was still not announced by press time if Mr. Ellison and/or Mr. Groth will be retaining Henry W. Holmes Jr. (who represented Ellison in the "Brillo" copyright infringement case from which Ellison won a huge settlement) to represent them in this case.

* * *

Cat Yronwode, the associate editor of Kitchen Sink's **The Spirit**, has compiled a definitive collection of Will Eisner entitled **The Art of Will Eisner 1934–1980**. The 128 page softcover book will be available in December for $8.95.

* * *

The second collection of Klaus Nordling's **Lady Luck** (the backup strip in the **Spirit Section**) will be published in December. This softbound, black and white book is priced at $5.95.

* * *

Vincent Moscoso, one of the founders of **Zap Comix** and a pioneer underground artist, is publishing a collection of his work. Priced at $10.00, **Moscoso Comics** will feature 32 pages of his most unusual work. This oversized collection will be available in December.

* * *

Just out is **The Mutants**, a collection of Berni Wrightson's early black and white artwork culled from now out-of-print fanzines. This material does not duplicate any of the work reprinted in **A Look Back**. The book retails for $9.95.

* * *

The publisher of **Pogo** magazine has just released a print of a full-color drawing by Walt Kelly from 1970. "We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us" is priced at $3.00.

* * *

A collection of Archie Goodwin's and Al Williamson's **Secret Agent Corrigan** is due out in December. Priced at $3.95, this black and white volume reprints the very first episodes of the strip, from Jan. 30, 1967 to Dec. 2, 1967. Set in a vintage Al Williamson jungle, the story follows Corrigan on the trail of a gang of criminals in the Carribean.

* * *

Also due in December is a hardcover reissue of **Sweet Gwendoline** by John Willie. Priced at $15.00, this collection is definitely for the sexually permissive adult only.

* * *

Starlog records is preparing a soundtrack album featuring music from **The Avengers** and the **New Avengers**. Also included on the album will be music from the Persuaders. The next "Screen Greats" book will spotlight Humphrey Bogart.

¢ 1980 Gary Kwapisz

An excerpt from the 1981 Fandom Calender Illustrated by Gary Kwapisz

(Continued from page 25)

DAVE: *Besides* Captain Action, *which I guess was the first toy merchandising comic book, did you create your own series?*

JIM: Well, I created *Karate Kid*, and they later gave him his own series. I wasn't real thrilled at that. The thing was that I happened to be working at DC at the time and I found out third hand that they were giving one of my characters a series. They didn't feel any obligation to ask me to write it or anything. But I never created another series. I never really had the opportunity to do it and now that I have the opportunity, I don't have the time.

DAVE: *Why did you leave DC and go over to Marvel?*

JIM: I was working for Murray Boltinoff and Julie Schwartz and they were very difficult people to work for. Julie especially. Our personalities didn't fit well together.

I really feel that the editor is responsible for the books and it's his right to be in charge of them so I defend to the death their right to conduct business any way they want. But they were not conducting it in a way that I was all that enthusiastic about. They didn't seem to be getting into the stuff I was doing, although I really tried to give them what they wanted. That's why people have told me that my work for Murray doesn't sound like me. Well no, it sounds like what Murray wanted. I was trying to be a professional writer and give him what he asked me for.

As a matter of fact Murray sent me an old Edmond Hamilton comic book because he just couldn't communicate to me what he wanted. I think that it was the origin of Element Lad. He said that, "This is the ideal comic book, the best comic book ever done. Read it and write like this." It was an old 1950s style comic book, where every panel is a new scene. If a scene lasted two panels, it was remarkable. Every panel would start with a caption like, "Soon, a fateful meeting on the Planet Zoon," and then you'd have a bunch of Legionaires around a table and one of them is saying, [in an affected Saturday morning cartoon baritone] "We must find Timberwolf!" Then the next panel would say, "Meanwhile on Earth, a dreadful accident occurs!"

If that's what he wants, fine, it's his job, and he's supposed to make that judgement. But I had trouble doing that, it's just not my style. But you can't really knock it, because Murray was selling books. Apparently, there are a lot of people out there who want that, and Murray was giving them what they wanted. I'm not making fun of that stuff, because a lot of it was good stuff, especially for the time that it was done. It might have been one of the most exciting comics of its time, but I had trouble relating to it. So it was inevitable that I would try to find something else that I could do better and feel better about.

Also, he kept re-writing things. And I wasn't happy with what came out. So eventually, what happened was Marvel made me an offer, and I came over and started working for Marvel. Or, I tried to come over and start working for Marvel. They gave me *Man-Wolf* and before I wrote my first issue, it was cancelled. Then they gave me *Super Villain Team-Up* and I wrote one issue. Then they took that away from me and I was just about to give up on the whole thing again, when they called me up again and offered me a staff job; associate editor, second in command. And I thought, "Well, that's interesting. I'll try that." I always thought I had an enormous amount of

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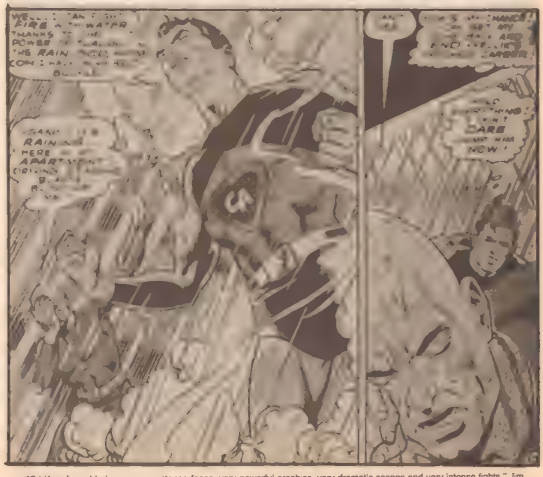

© 1980 DC Comics Inc.

"[Gil Kane] would give me very intense faces, very powerful graphics, very dramatic scenes and very intense fights." Jim Shooter has twice worked with Gil Kane. On DC's **Captain Action**, the very first toy merchandising comic book and **Daredevil**. Note that Wally Wood's inking style in **Captain Action** captures the heroic ideal inherent in Kane's pencils, while Klaus Janson concentrates on the raw savagery of Kane's graphics. Excerpted from **Captain Action** 2 and **Daredevil** 146

background in editing, that it might be fun to edit. You know, to use all that stuff that Mort had taught me.

DAVE: *In your* Daredevil *stories, particularly in the issues that Gil Kane did, I notice a very relentless, vicious quality in the fight scenes. Was this a conscious effort on your part, was this Gil's addition, or was it simply what the stories dictated?*

JIM: When I took it over *Daredevil* was very convoluted. Marv [Wolfman] had basically been expecting to get off the book for quite a while, so there were all these dangling plot lines. A character had been kidnapped six or eight issues ago and forgotten. So, I was just trying to tie it all up.

And I was working with Gil. Gil is really concerned with graphics and he'd give me very intense faces, very powerful graphics, very dramatic scenes and very intense fights. Which is good but he's not the sort of person who pays a whole lot of concern to the plot. So I would plot something which I had all figured out as being dramatic; a good story and very clear. Then I would get back pictures which didn't have a whole lot to do with what I wanted. But they were great pictures. So I tried to make due with what I got. Some stuff was brilliant because Gil's graphics were just brilliant. Some stuff just fell flat, because we were not telling the same story. And I felt that some of it failed. Since I'm the writer and my imput came after Gil's, then it's my fault. If it wasn't right, I should have fixed it, or I should have changed the story to make sense. Like I said, we all make mistakes. But we did some good stuff.

The issues that I think are the most comprehensible are the ones that Carmine [Infantino] did, because I virtually did a full script for Carmine. He doesn't like working from plots. So with Carmine I got more or less what I wanted. I think the series gets better and I wish I could do it again because they were good stories. If they were well told I think that they might have been memorable.

DAVE: *How did you approach Matt Murdoch's blindness, as a writer? For instance, did you find it necessary to find an incident in virtually every issue that would indicate that it was a "day in the life of a blind man"?*

JIM: Oh yeah, I think that was the key thing to the character. I read the previous issues and Marv apparently didn't think that that was important. You could read lots and lots of those issues and not realize that he was blind. He was wisecracking, and swinging around on this cable that sort of goes off panel and must be attached to something and it came off as second-rate Spider-Man. Of course that may not be too bad.

But I wanted to focus on what makes this character unique, while they'd been focusing on what makes him the same. So I focused on his blindness and his super senses, and the advantage that gives him. I really tried to make it apparent that this guy is blind. I did a bit where he gets hit on the back of the head with a golf ball, and temporarily loses his radar sense. Matt tries to get around his office and he starts tripping over chairs and things, because he's never bothered to count the steps. Everybody's surprised at him because they thought that he had the place memorized. I always tried to do something like that.

In that same story, I had him walk into a gunshop, and the guy behind the counter said, "Pardon me fella, you sure you know where you are? This is a gun shop." He has to explain why a blind man is in a gun shop. "I'm here for a gift." That kind of thing. Yes, I thought that was very important.

DAVE: *Do you feel that Daredevil is similar to Batman?*

JIM: I was accused of making him like Batman. I made him grimmer and less wisecracking. But, one of the first things I set out to do, in that first story that I did, "In Search Of the Purple Man" was to emphasize his difference, to change his motivation. From reading Marv's stories, it seemed to me that the only motivation this guy had was that it was fun catching crooks. There was one scene where a sniper's shooting people, at an ice skating rink. There are people dying all over the ice, Daredevil swings in, making wisecracks, gets the sniper, knocks him out and swings away-leaving all these people bleeding on the ice. So he caught the bad guy, and he's a happy guy.

I tried to think about what can I do that's different? We've got lots of guys that catch bad guys. How about if we have a hero that's concerned for the victims? Great. This guy's a lawyer so it fits! This guy's a crusading lawyer, concerned for the victims. Aha! I couldn't just change his character with no explanation, I had to have an event. So I set up this thing where he's so busy searching for the Purple Man that he forgets about everything else. Foggy is drinking himself to death. His girlfriend, Heather, is suffering because her father is in jail. The father thinks he's really guilty. Only Daredevil can solve all their problems. But what's Daredevil doing? Chasing the bad guy. So I build to the point where her father is so

EVEN THOUGH THERE IS A CHANCE HE'LL REMEMBER ME AS A FORMER MAN!
—THE SALESMAN MODEL?
PARDON ME, MISTER! ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE IN THE RIGHT PLACE?
CERTAINLY NOT! I'M IN THE RIGHT PLACE!
WHOA! SHE'S A CUTIE AND BLIND!
THIS IS A GUN SHOP!
UH—YES I'M HERE FOR—A GIFT!
I SAY—DO I MEAN I HAVE TO BE BLIND TO BUY A GUN?
HE'S REMEMBERING ME AND WHO I AM AS A BLIND MAN BUYING A GUN!
BULLETS? I DON'T KNOW WHAT BULLETS ARE!
BEARING GIFTS FOR THE POOR!!

LATER THAT DAY AT THE OFFICES OF NELSON AND MURDOCK...
FOGGY? —FATHER?
MATT! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? I COULDN'T SEE WHAT HIT ME—OWW!
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THERE WAS A CHAIR THERE IN THE WAY?
BUT—THERE'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE AND YOU HAVE THE OFFICE MEMORIZED!
NO—I DON'T—BECAUSE I'VE NEVER HAD TO COUNT STEPS AND MEMORIZE LIKE A NORMAL BLIND MAN!

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Two views of Matt Murdoch's blindness from **Daredevil** 146. In the first sequence Murdoch is treated as a blind man although his radar senses allow him to "see" better than an average man. In the second sequence after Matt has temporarily lost his powers, his friends are surprised that he has not memorized his immediate surroundings.

upset, so sure he's guilty, that he commits suicide. This is the event that brings it home to Daredevil that he's been doing this wrong. You screwed up and you've been doing it wrong, and it's cost this guy his life. Now don't you feel like a schmuck? That was the event I created to make exactly that change in character.

My intention was that Daredevil would be the hero who would be concerned with the victims. Gil and I plotted the redemption story. First we had the story where the father was dead and Daredevil felt terrible. Then came the redemption story, where he would be just lost in this fog, and this little kid would get hit by a bus or something like that. The kid's scream, of course, is a lot louder to him than it is to anyone else. He can't get away from being Daredevil. By saving the kid, and getting the bad guy, in that order, he redeems himself. He decides that, "I blew it once, but now I understand, and I'll never do it again. I'm going to be concerned for the victims." And that was going to be the new Daredevil.

I felt I was *stuck* with a creature of the night. A guy who's blind and has super senses is either a creature of the night, or he's crazy. I figured that anybody who runs around in this red suit with horns on it, in the middle of the night, sneaking up on people, has got to be a scary figure. And that smacks of Batman. So what I was doing different than Batman was to give him a characterization as Daredevil which fit with his characterization as Matt Murdock. A crusading lawyer is a person who's concerned for victims, and so is Daredevil. Daredevil would have his outrage based on the victim's suffering. His primary goal would be to take care of the victims, not to just happily chase after the bad guys while the victims are bleeding to death. That was what I intended.

Unfortunately, at that point, I was forced to get off, I didn't have time to write it anymore. Roger McKenzie took it over, he and Frank Miller got really heavily into a Batman riff, they just lost what I had set up. They went a different direction, which is their right.

I think that Frank, who's now writing and drawing the strip, realized the error of their ways and is coming around to what I was saying. My feeling is that Daredevil really is a guy who's different from Batman. He's not a psychotic and he's not hung up on avenging his parents. He's a creature of the night, but he's a whole different kind of creature. I think there's room for several different creatures of the night.

DAVE: *How did you approach the Avengers? Did you find it difficult to handle so many diverse characters?*

JIM: One of the letters I got that I was proudest of was a letter from a fan who picked out something I was deliberately trying to do. In one Avengers story, every character under the sun appeared even though there were a couple of characters who only had a couple of lines. He said that even from those couple of lines, you could tell what kind of people these were. Their character was conveyed, even though they only had a couple of key lines. I spent more time on that than anything else. Not only what they would say but just how Captain America would say this, or just how the Beast would handle it. Things like that.

There was an issue of the *Avengers*, it may have been the last one I wrote, where Iron Man gives the order for the Wasp and someone else to start trying to get in touch with the Avengers who aren't present. So they're coming in to give their report, and he asks, "Well, who'd you get in touch with?" and the Wasp says, "Well, we got in touch with Black Panther, somebody else, and oh yeah, Captain Marvel called us, he said something about being aware of our need." That wasn't in the plot, and it wasn't in the pencils, but when I'm writing this, and I came to the part where they were supposed to have gotten in touch with Captain Marvel, I felt that, No! *He* would get in touch with *them*, cause he would know, he's cosmically aware. It leaped up and screamed at me and I put it there. I'm so proud of little things like that because anybody could write, "Yeah, we got in touch with Captain Marvel", but it's the essence of the character, that Captain Marvel knew. In every place where a person talked or did something, I tried to find something unique about them to emphasize, I got that letter, and it was a real thrill.

DAVE: *Did you ever consider writing outside of comics; a novel or a screenplay?*

JIM: Oh, I don't know. Let me tell you this. I think that as far as stories go, I can write stories with anybody. I think that I know how a story is put together, and I can put together a story as well as anybody anywhere. I could do stories for TV, or novels or anything. What I'd have to do, if I went outside of comics, is I'd have to learn the form. Just like I learned the form and researched it when I was 13 years old. Just like I figured out how to do it so they'd like it. And it's a lot of hassle to learn the form.

Comics is really a good place to be. It pays well, it's something which is easy for me. It is virtually untapped as far as its potential goes.

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OH, NO—I'M THAT KID! WE'RE GONNA HIT THAT KID!
BLAMM!
BACK OFF, I'LL GET THAT KID SOME AID!
IT'S A CULT—AND HE'S BACK! MORT-GAL—LAST BEAST'S FRIEND AND SLAVE! PAWS FAR TO RUSSIA!
BUT BLIND AS HE IS, DAREDEVIL IS UNAFFECTED BY THE GAS! HE'S GOING IN WITH A DOUBLE HANDFUL OF BATARANGS AND HE'S BLOOD RUNS COLD.
BACK OVER HERE!
A DEADLY BOOMERANG MISSES DAREDEVIL BY INCHES!
THE SHOT FROM HIS

One of Shooter's original intentions was to alter Daredevil's character from what it had been during the time that Marv Wolfman wrote the series and make Daredevil empathise with the victims of crime. In the scene excerpted above, Matt Murdoch is jarred from his obsessive search for the Purple Man, by the death of an innocent. From **Daredevil** 151

"The trouble with this job is that I don't think anyone really understands what it is. It's the ultimate flak-catching job."

It's an incredible medium. And, you know, I'm not under any pressure or in a terrific hurry to leave it. It might be interesting to try something else someday. I tried writing one of those novellas [*The Avengers*] for the Simon & Shuster Marvel series, and it was my first effort ever in prose. My peers told me I did okay for the first time out. I felt a little awkward about it because I kept feeling that if I really studied this and had a command of what I was doing, then I wouldn't be feeling my way along so much. But I don't feel too incompetent to do other things. I just feel that I'm okay where I am.

DAVE: *Do you forsee yourself going back to writing, in the future?*

JIM: Oh gee, I don't know. Sometimes I wake up in the morning and I just can't face another day as editor, and I think, "Nope, today I'll tell them I quit, and be a writer." But I really don't think I'll do that. I'm a pretty stable, secure person, and I like this job. It has its rough moments, like when your character is assassinated in *The Comics Journal*. But that's part of the territory.

DAVE: *Do you want to discuss whatever you just alluded to?*

JIM: The trouble with this job is that I don't think anyone really understands what it is. It's the ultimate flak-catching job. To the people, to the publisher and the president and all the financial people and everyone who is one of the upstairs executives here, I am responsible for everything that goes wrong at Marvel Comics. To the fans and the pros and everyone else I am responsible for everything that goes wrong in Marvel Comics *and with their lives*. And it's part of the package deal. Archie really sympathizes with me. [laughter]

DAVE: *Archie Goodwin? [Marvel's sixth editor-in-chief, and Shooter's immediate predecessor.]*

JIM: Yeah. Because, having been here 1½ years, he is one who knows. You're just constantly getting blamed for stuff that you may or may not have had any control over. But what's the difference, as far as *The Comics Journal* is concerned? What I was alluding to is, since I've been here, I've had to let Rick Marshall go, and he made a lot of comments about Marvel and me to anyone who'd listen. So a lot of that stuff got printed in *The Comics Journal*. When Marv Wolfman and I couldn't reach a contract settlement and he went to DC he had a lot of stuff to say that got printed. When Roy Thomas and I recently couldn't reach a contract, he had a lot to say. And it all gets printed in *The Comics Journal*. And the fans really don't know what goes on, they only know that they read these vitruperous letters and I guess they think I'm this monster that lives in this cave here and slays anyone who comes in. It's kind of frustrating, because you can't reply to anything like that. It'll just make it worse. You can't say anything, you know, and it's really unfortunate, but it's part of the deal.

DAVE: *To address that for a minute, there are rumors circulating about George Pèrez' departure. Anything you want to talk about?*

JIM: There's not a lot to talk about. We parted on very friendly terms. Basically, what happened was that George used to do an incredible work load here—four books a month or something like that. And I guess he started having personal problems and he had to substantially cut back his workload and he cut down to only one book a month. And finally, his contract expired. We knew how much he had been doing.

He was still quite welcome to be here and draw for us and everything, but after his contract expired the people at DC went after him in a big way. And I can't blame him for wanting to do some work for them. They paid him very well. I guess he got over his problems and he started being able to do more work. And so, he picked up, aside from the regular book that we had given him here, some regular work there. Now, the trouble was that he picked up too much, and he had to give up something, and I guess, he ultimately decided he wanted to work for them, since they had more for him than we did.

He wrote a nice letter saying that being under the deadline pressure for two companies was too much and he wanted to simplify his life. He still intends to finish up the stuff he has been doing for us, and to work for us in the future, if he has the time. So there is no hostility that I'm aware of.

DAVE: *You mentioned earlier that when you first worked at DC, each editor jealously controlled and guarded his creative people from the other editors. As Marvel's editor-in-chief do you fear a similar sort of situation at Marvel which is now divided into a similar system of editors controlling a stable of books?*

JIM: I don't think that having several editors necessarily creates that situation. I think that it may create the danger of *that* situation. But if you'll notice we don't have editors with their own stables of people. We have got the same writers working for 3 or 4 different editors. I encourage that. My whole job as far as I'm concerned is to make sure that these guys are not working at cross-purposes, to co-ordinate between them. And we're all very friendly; people get together all the time. I *insist* that everyone on my editorial staff either do artwork or writing or something like that. They all work for each other, not for themselves, and that helps to cross-pollinate.

I think that way as long as we have one person in charge we preserve the best of the Marvel system which just had Stan in charge, guiding everything. But by having all those people who have a degree of power over their books, that gives us the best of the DC system, which is that it brings in many thoughts, much variety. I don't want all the books to be the same. I want to have a difference between Al Milgom's books and Louise Jones' books. I don't want them to be contradictory. I do my best, we all do our best to keep in line with the Marvel universe, because I think that's great, it's great to have a consistent universe. I've learned a lot about what not to do, how not to handle people and also positive things about how to work with people, from the string of editors I've worked for. I'm trying to avoid the pitfalls and accentuate the positive. The books will tell if we're working right. If they get better then we must be doing it right, if they fall apart then I screwed up.

DAVE: *Has not being familiar with most of Marvel's books, the continuity of the Marvel Universe, which you've referred to as being a very beautiful thing, hurt you, in this position?*

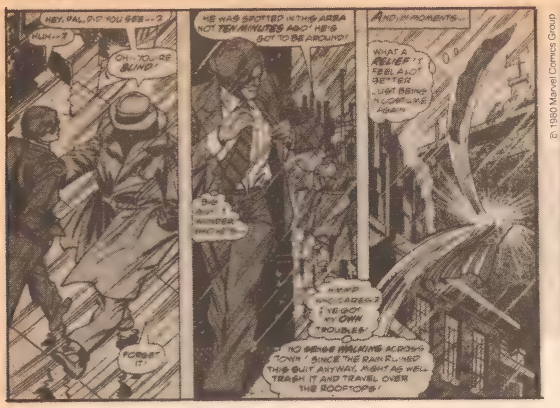
JIM: I am very familiar with the early ones. The early Marvel stuff is what got me interested in comics in the first place. Those books got me to write my first story. Afterwards, I kept track of the Marvel stuff, because I wanted to know what was going on. If nothing else, it was my finger on the pulse of comics. Towards the end of my first tenure at DC, I didn't follow it as much. Then when I got out of comics the first time I didn't follow it for a period of years.

Since I've been working here of course, I've been keeping on top of it. I read every single thing published. So I do have a gap in my knowledge, but I've found that it really doesn't hurt me. If something comes up that I'm not familiar with we've got the bound volumes so I can research it. In my five years here at Marvel, I have acquired a nodding familiarity with what went on. So that if someone mentions the Kree-Skrull war, "I can say, oh yeah, that's in the *Avengers* that Englehart did. I don't remember it as well as I remember—

DAVE: *You mean Thomas. Thomas did it.*

JIM: Did he? Oops. Well, anyway, I know it's there, I can go look it up. I know what they're talking about. But if you ask me about the first Molecule Man story, I can give you that panel by panel. I can tell you what happened, because I remember that, I remember it clearly. I read it when I was a kid, I liked it, and I probably re-read it a couple dozen times. So, in the time that I've been here, I've probably at least paged through all that stuff, looking for things. If you know the fundamentals of writing, and have a reasonable background in the Marvel Universe, between the droves of experts we have around here, your own general knowledge and the bound volumes, you can get by. I got the writer wrong, on the Kree-Skrull war, but that is not really going to affect anything. If I would write something in a Bullpen Bulletin about that, I certainly would go look it up. I wouldn't trust my memory. That's never going to be a problem. Stan doesn't know it all either and even when he was doing it I don't think he knew it. He got along.

DAVE: *What do you feel makes a good editor?*


HEY, PAL, DID YOU SEE--?
HUH--?
OH!--TOO BE BLIND!
FORGET IT!
HE WAS SPOTTED IN THIS AREA NOT TEN MINUTES AGO! HE'S GOT TO BE AROUND!
BUT I DIDN'T SEE HIM!--!
AND, IN MOMENTS...
WHAT A RELIEF! I FEEL A LOT BETTER...LIGHT BEING CONSUMED AGAIN
HUH? WHO--EAGER? I'VE GOT MY OWN TROUBLES!
NO BEING WALKING ACROSS TOWN SINCE THE RAIN RUINED THIS QUIT ANYWAY, MIGHT AS WELL TRASH IT AND TRAVEL OVER THE ROOFTOPS!
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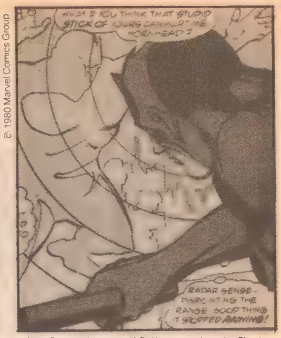
WHAT'D YOU THINK THAT STUPID STICK OF YOURS CAN DO? TIME HORN HEAD?
RADAR SENSE--PARDON THE RANGE SOMETHING I DROPPED BANNING!
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Side: Despite the power of Gil Kane's graphics, Jim Shooter felt more comfortable working with Carmine Infantino, before he wrote those stories from a full script. Above, how do you see the world with radar senses? Carmine Infantino and Jim Shooter try to visualize that unique viewpoint. Both excerpts are from Daredevil 149

JIM: Back when I was working with Mort we'd do some talking about the plot and sometimes we'd hash it out. Once the plot was OK, he said "write the story." And when that plot was OK'd and the story was written. Sometimes Mort would fix a few little mistakes, but it was usually pretty much what I'd put down. Then he'd call me up and tear it apart panel by panel telling me everything I did wrong. Hours and hours on the phone, telling me everything I did wrong. Now that sounds bad, but in a way it was good because I got to the point where I had the confidence that after I wrote it, (unless I went crazy,) *that* was the way it came out.

In the 4 or 5 yars I worked with Mort I had a total of 4 pages rejected. They weren't rejected because of the writing, they were rejected because after approving the plot and after I wrote the pages, Mort had thought about something and decided, "I don't want to do this, so restructure it." I actually cut out panels from those pages to save the panels so I didn't even have to rewrite the whole 4 pages, I just rewrote panels here and there.

I think that's good and that's how an editor should work. You should put your input in at the beginning and after it's all over, you should sit down, go over it and say, "Look next time you come to this situation you can do something more exciting."

That's how I work it with my editors. They deal with the writers however they want to because that's their problem. The way I deal with the editors is I get the printer's proofs, the make readys and I go through them with a ballpoint pen and make my comments. After I'm done with that, I sit down with the editor and I go over it. Now this is printed already so nothing can be changed. If I come to a lot of stuff that I don't like, then I know I have to have a lot of long talks with the editor. But generally, I'll have comments like "This dialogue is too convuluted, or whatever, and I'll say, "When you come to this again I think you should do it differently."

Most of the time they'll say, "Oh, OK." A lot of the times, especially with Milgrom they'll say, "No, I did this on purpose, it works because of this." Sometimes he convinces me, sometimes he's *right*. Those guys shouldn't feel that someone's looking over their shoulder. They should have the confidence that once they finish it, the book will go out the way *they* want it. Then if we have a fundamental disagreement, we should work it out. I think that's real important and that's the way we do it here.

Traditionally at Marvel, the writers have had more or less that kind of latitude. The writers have been given a lot of input into the books. That's the Marvel tradition. I think that's just great. Same with the artists. You criticize the efforts and try to make it better next time. You don't mess with it in progress.

DAVE: *That's one of the things that Steve Englehart mentioned in his interview. You had your shot, and either you did it or you were out.*

JIM: Yeah, I agree in principle with what Steve said, but with the qualification that that applies to people who are capable of being reasonably on the mark. Which Steve usually was, his stories were usually acceptable. The only thing is that even in the stories I did for Mort, I would do things wrong and Mort would fix them sometimes.

I can recall Steve Englehart stories, where for instance, Thor throws his hammer and it returns to the spot where it's thrown from, rather than to his hand. Now for the sake of the plot, it was convenient for Steve to have it return to the spot it was thrown from rather than to his hand. That's wrong! It's a mistake that should be fixed. And if that infringes on somebody's creativity I'm sorry, but that's too bad.

If he's defending that kind of stuff then he's wrong. If he's saying what I'm saying which is you can't get into anything or do something wonderful unless you have some kind of reasonable understanding with your editor that you'll get your differences ironed out first and that what you finally write is basically going to be printed, I agree with him. I think that his implication that that used to be the way and isn't any more is wrong. The people that are capable of handling things that way, the Goodwins, the O'Neils and even newer guys like Roger Stern, don't have people rehashing their stuff. Basically it's the new guys, the younger guys, the guys who need more training who are the ones that are getting more stuff rearranged or whatever.

Ideally I would like everyone to be in that situation. I'm sure the editors do too because they don't want to work. They want the stuff to come in, be ready and go out. When Archie Goodwin turns in a script, you read it, it's nice, and you send it to the letterer. That's how they want to do it, they don't want to have to hassle with the stuff.

I sort of agree with the principle of what Steve said, but I disagree with his assessment that we want it otherwise. I also find it strange that he's condemning comic books that he admits he hasn't read in years. I think there's a lot of stuff that's being condemned because people aren't reading it. Walt Simonson's done some wonderful *Galactica*'s; Frank Miller's *Daredevil*; Mary Jo Duffy's *Power Man*. It's good stuff! And it tends to be written off by people who haven't read comics in years. I don't understand that.

DAVE: *Some people say that the four-color comics industry is slowly on its way out now, and that it's just too big to fall overnight. Do you see that, or do you see a viable future?*

JIM: I think they're crazy. I think that, especially here at Marvel, the regular comics are the backbone of the operation. They're doing fine, they're selling well. They're profitable, and we're very happy with them. I think there may come a day when you just can't get letterpress printing in that kind of volume. If the presses at Sparta ever break down, I sincerely doubt that they'll replace them. And so we may have to change the package in that we may have to go to offset printing at a slightly higher cost.

But the point of the matter is this: I think that Marvel will always publish a package that is the least expensive package that we can put together. And if the least expensive package we can put together costs 75¢, that's what it will be. And I think it will sell just like the regular comic books. I think there is a market out there for inexpensive entertainment. And as long as we're producing whatever the most inexpensive package we can produce is, we'll sell those.

We'd like to open up other markets. We'd like to open up the trade paperback market.

We'd like to open up the magazine market more than we have. We'd like to open up a lot of other markets that we haven't even explored, like videotapes and stuff like that. And we're doing all that. I think the fact that we're doing market research and testing, and trying things out like the magazines, the trade paperbacks, stuff like that. People say, "Aha, see, that's because the comics aren't selling." No no. That's because the comics are selling well enough that we can afford to expand.

It's good business to diversify. If I were in business and I had one product, I sure as hell would want to have more than one product, so that if disaster happened, I would have some kind of hedge. So, we're comfortable enough that we can afford to mess around and try different formats.

That [pointing at a rack of comics] is not comics. That's one way to package comics. Our product is graphic stories. We can package them any way you want. That's not an expensive package. *Epic* is a more expensive package. And there is lots of stuff in between these two. There's lots of stuff that I don't have with me now that I can reach to show you. We can package graphic stories in many ways. Graphic stories is a medium which is just as viable, just as powerful as film, or television, or any medium.

DAVE: *In years past, there were several Marvel oriented shows on television.* The Merry Marvel Marching Society—*had five different superheroes—and* Spider-Man *cartoons and* Fantastic Four *cartoons. Basically, they represented quite accurately, the comics. Now, whenever you have something on TV, a cartoon or live action, it seems like its been changed drastically for some type of audience that you think is out there. Why is that?*

JIM: Well, that's not us. Until recently, when we acquired our animation studio, we had no facilities to do animated work, and all the animated work that's on television is controlled by the networks, really. Because, you have to make presentations to the networks, and if they're interested, they put up the money. Since they're putting up the money, you better do it their way.

What happened, was we signed some deals with the TV people for some of the live action stuff and some of the animation stuff in which we really didn't have enough of a veto power. There was nothing we could do about it. They had an option to do twelve characters, or something like that, and until they ran out their contract they could continue murdering our characters on the tube. All that has done is to convince us how important it is not to let them let Spider-Man have a dog, and stuff like that. So, you know, we are older and wiser, and we have a large commitment now to making sure that we don't get our characters screwed up again.

In recent years, we've had a lot of interest in our characters, and a lot of people want to use our characters on TV, but we haven't had any control over them. The networks use them the way they want to, and the studios that produced them were not capable of understanding the Marvel stuff and treating it the right way.

I don't think you'll ever have 100 percent control over it as long as the networks are involved. And as soon as you do a movie, you're using a lot of other people's money, and when it's their money, they obviously have things to say about it. But we're working on it. That's why Stan's out there.

DAVE: *Does the licensing restrict you? For instance, you can't turn Conan into a homosexual because it destroys his value to the other licensees?*

JIM: Yeah, of course we have to respect the property. This is a great argument against people who say comics are losing money or comics are going bad. A lot of people will tell you, "Hey, comics just exist on the merchandising." We don't own the merchandising for any of those licensed books. Look how many licensed books we have here: *Rom, Conan, Tarzan, Micronauts, Shogun Warriors, Star Wars, Battlestar Galactica.* I can't think of them all. We don't own any of the licensing or any of the merchandising on any of that stuff. The only way we can make money is if the comics make money. We've got a lot of them.

They must be making money because the comics are our only source of revenue from those characters. We're very happy with licensing good properties as well as with licensing our characters to other people for their use.

DAVE: *As editor-in-chief of Marvel comics, if a thirteen year old kid wrote in with a plot synopsis with breakdowns and a cover layout, probably in color, would you consider him in the same way that Mort considered you?*

JIM: Yeah, I think that I'm a reasonably objective person, and I think that I could probably tell if the guy really had it. The thing is,

The following is as complete a listing as possible of Jim Shooter's uncredited work for Mort Weisinger during his first stint at DC. We apologize for any omissions or inaccuracies but the following is the most complete listing that we could compile. The Comic times wishes to thank E. Nelson Bridwell and Ken Gale for their gracious help in compiling the following list:

ADVENTURE

346: "One Of Us Is a Traitor"
347: "The Traitor's Triumph"
348: "Target—21 Legionnaires", (First story Shooter wrote, Origin of Sun Boy)
349: "The Rogue Legionnaire", (First appearance of Universo and Rond Vidar)
352: "The Fatal Five", (Part 1)
353: "The Doomed Legionaire", (Part 2: The Death of Ferro Lad)
354: "The Adult Legion", (Part one; Future Story)
355: "The War of the Legions", (Part Two)
357: "The Ghost of Ferro Lad"
358: "The Hunter"
359: "Outlawed Legionnaires", (Part 1)
360: "The Legion Chain Gang", (Part 2)
361: "The Unkillables"
362: "The Chemoids Are Coming", (Part 1)
363: "Black Day for the Legion", (Part 2)
364: "Revolt of The Super Pets"
365: "Escape of the Fatal Five", (Part 1: Introduction of Shadow Lass)
366: "Fight for the Championship of the Universe", (Part 2)
367: "No Escape from the Circle of Death" (First Black Circle)
368: "Mutiny of the Super-Heroines"
369: "Mordru the Merciless", (Part 1)
370: "The Devil's Jury", (Part 2)
371: "The Colossal Failure", (Part 1)
372: "School for Super Villians", (Part 2: Origin of Legion of Super Villains)
373: "The Tornado Twins"
374: "Mission Diabolical"
375: "King of the Legion", (Part 1)
376: "The Execution of Chameleon Boy", (Part 2)
377: "Heroes for Hire"
378: "Twelve Hours to Live" (Part 1)
379: "Burial in Space" (Part 2)
380: "The Legion's Space Odyssey"

SUPERMAN

190: "The Four Element Enemy"
191: "Prisoner of the Demon" (Star Saphire)
195: "Fury of the Kryptonian Killer"
199: "Superman's Race with the Flash"
213: "The Most Dangerous Door in the World"
220: "Who Stole My Super Powers?"

WORLD'S FINEST

162: "Pawns of the Jousting Master"
163: "Duel of the Super Duo"
172: "Superman and Batman—Brothers"
173: "The Jekyll-Hyde Heroes"

CAPTAIN ACTION

1: "Origin of Captain Action"
2: "The Battle Begins"

ACTION

340: "Power of the Parasite" (First Parasite Story)
342: "The Super-Human Bomb"
343: "Eterno the Immortal"
344: "The (Super)girl in the Greenhouse" (Part 1: Supergirl story)
345: "The Exile of Steel" (Part 2: Supergirl story)
348: "Clark Kent, Fighting Federal Agent"
361: "The Power of the Parasite" (Legion Backup stories in **Action**)
378: "The Forbidden Fruit" (Timber Wolf drug addiction story)
380: "Half a Legionnaire"
381: "The Hapless Hero"
382: "Kill a Friend to Save a World"
384: "Lament for a Legionnaire"

JIMMY OLSEN

97: "Fortress Death-Trap"
99: "The One Man Legion"
105: "The World of One Thousand Clones"
106: "The Lone Wolf Legionnaire Reporter"
121: "Three Lives of Superman"
123: "The Robber Robot"

SUPERBOY

135: "The Menace of the Mechano-Master"
140: "The Wizard of Odds"

though, that I don't have the time that Mort did to work with him. So he'd have to be better than I was. He'd have to almost be a finished product when he came in. Whereas when I came in, I really needed a lot of work, and was fortunate that Mort cared to take the time to work on it. But regardless of age, race, national origin or what planet they're from or anything, if the stuff is good, we'll make them an offer.

As a matter of fact, when I started working here, they had this standard answer that they'd give everyone who'd send in, "never send samples, we don't need writers, you can't get work by sending in samples." That's what they were telling people at conventions and stuff. There was this little form letter they'd send out, saying "Thank you very much but we don't need writers, we already have writers." And I said, "Wait a minute. Now I'm the editor. How am I going to tell people that you can't get a job by sending in samples? That's how *I* got my job. Furthermore, that's how everyone I know got their job. So we're not going to lie."

It's a lot of work for me to go through all these samples and write all those letters, and I often spend my weekends doing it. But anybody who sends in reasonable samples gets a reply. If it's on the back of a paper bag, in crayon, probably Virginia [Romita] will just send them a postcard. But even those I see and go through before I tell her to send these people postcards. But if it's a sincere submission, I'll read it and if it's got any merit at all, I answer it.

I have a memo right here to call one of the people who sent in samples. They were good, we corresponded a couple of times, and she's going to come up. I'm going to spend a couple hours with her, give her the $1.98 *How to Write Marvel Comics* lecture and let her try and apply. If it doesn't work, she loses. And if it works out, it'll be yet another case of somebody who sent samples and got work.

DAVE: *What is Stan Lee's present role? he's listed as publisher and he's general spokesman for Marvel, but, does he have any direct imput anymore?*

JIM: Oh sure, but not really in the day to day stuff. His title is executive vice-president and publisher. What that means is that he is the second officer of the company. The president of the company, the president of Marvel Comics, is Jim Galton—Oh, by the way, we just changed the name of the company—The president of Marvel Entertainment Group is Jim Galton.

Stan also has another title that has to do with our film projects, but I don't know what that is. Probably executive vice-president and producer, or something. At any rate, he's the creative director. He literally has the final say on everything created. Galton has the final say on everything that has to do with business.

"How am I going to tell people that you can't get a job by sending in samples? That's how I got my job. . . ."

DAVE: *So it's more like a veto power than an input?*

JIM: No, not true. He doesn't mess around with the day to day stuff. He mostly spends his time out at the coast overseeing movie projects, TV projects and the animation studio we just acquired. And that's fine. As far as comic books go, what Stan does is, we send him a xerox of every cover, and he makes his comments on the covers. When he's in town, we get together and talk about whatever the major issues are. Like if we want to make a major change in a book, if we're going to kill Aunt May, I'd have to sit down and talk it all out with Stan and the editors, writers and artists involved.

Quite often, we'll have general meetings where we'll go over a batch of books, and sit down and really talk in general terms about how to make good comic books. Any time there's any major decision made regarding the books, cancelling, or starting titles or anything like that, he's involved in the decision. Very often he goes along with what I suggest, because he knows I'm on the firing line and I have the most information, and I think he trusts me.

When we start a book, a lot of times I'll go over the plot with Stan. He doesn't read every script. He doesn't read every finished book. He doesn't work with them constantly day to day. But he is still the ultimate creative authority on the stuff. And that suits me fine.

DAVE: *You give the impression that you're going to be in comics for a long time to come. Are there any editorial levels left between you and Stan Lee, or is he now a man with his neck on the line? [laughter]*

JIM: That's a funny way to put it. Uh, no, I report to Stan Lee and Jim Galton.

DAVE: *So until Stan leaves, you can't move any further up?*

JIM: I don't want to move any further up.

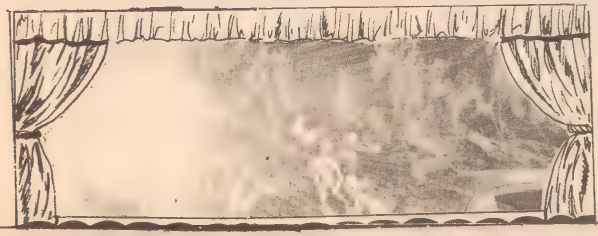
DAVE: *But if you wanted to?*

JIM: I guess not. But Stan Lee has already left. He's already out on the West Coast, and he's functioning as creative director rather than, in a technical sense, the publisher. But that doesn't matter, because if they said, "Look, you'll be a publisher now. You'll sit in Stan's office and you'll talk on the phone all day." I don't want that. I am as high as I can go and still have any real contact with the creative process. And that's where I want to be.

Now, they can pay me lots more money. They can change my title. They can call me anything they want; head bottle washer, that's fine. But leave me here. Leave me alone. That's the nice thing about this job. I really feel that with my guys here, I can make Marvel Comics wonderfully successful. There's really no limit on what we can get done, and how wonderful we can become. My plan is to make this place bigger than Disney. It's not something I can do, of course, but I feel it's also Galton's plan and I'm not in a holding pattern here. We're going to charge ahead. And yeah, I plan to be in comics for awhile. I don't see why not. It pays well, it's pleasant. I got my own room. What more could you ask. [laughter] I mean, look at this luxurious office, right? [laughter amid the clutter]. ■

(Portions of this interview were conducted at a later date with Mr. Shooter by Mark Gasper.)

COMING ATTRACTIONS



A Mike Kaluta interview

Don McGregor examines Dressed to Kill, Close Encounters of the Third Kind and the distortions of fandom.

How Do Comics Treat the Bible? by Cat Yronwode

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(Editors note: *This month we present a double checklist in an attempt to beat the deadline blues, catch up, and stay ahead.*)

Marvel

FEBRUARY

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN (213): The Frightful Four return with a new member to battle Spider-Man. Story by Denny O'Neil, art by Johnny Romita, Jr. and Jim Mooney.

AVENGERS (204): Features the return of the Yellow Claw. Plot by Bob Budiansky, script by David Micheline, pencils by Don Newton, and inks by Dan Green.

CAPTAIN AMERICA (254): Cap faces his WWII vampire foe, Baron Blood, in this story by Roger Stern, John Byrne, and Joe Rubinstein

CONAN (119): Conan battles a sinister magician to win eternal rest for his grandfather's undead soul. Written by J.M. DeMatteis, with pencils and inks by John Buscema.

DEFENDERS (92): The Defenders must aid Eternity or the Universe dies. Script by J.M. DeMatteis, art by Don Perlin and Pablo Marcus

DOCTOR STRANGE (45): Doc Strange battles demons in his basement, in this tale by Chris Claremont, Gene Colan and Dan Green

FANTASTIC FOUR (220): Written by Doug Moench, penciled by Bill Sienkiewicz and inked by Joe Sinnott.

INCREDIBLE HULK (255): Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled and inked by Sal Buscema

IRON MAN (143). Iron Man clashes with the Suntunion aboard a five mile long space station. Written by David Micheline, with art by Johnny Romita, Jr. and Bob Layton.

MACHINE MAN (19): "Jolted by the Jack O' Lantern," by Tom DeFalco and Steve Ditko

MASTER OF KUNG FU (97): Shang-Chi must face his own dark side, in this offbeat story by Doug Moench, Mike Zeck and Gene Day

MARVEL PREMIERE (58). Continuing the adventures of Doctor Who. Written by Mills & Wagner, with art by Dave Gibbons.

MARVEL TALES (124): Reprinting *Spider-Man #147*, written by Gerry Conway, with pencils by Ross Andru and inks by Mike Esposito and Dave Hunt

MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE (72): The Thing teams up with the Inhumans to tackle Maelstrom. Written by Ralph Macchio and Mark Gruenwald. Pencils by Ron Wilson, and inks by Chic Stone.

MARVEL SUPER ACTION (28): Reprinting *Avengers #67*, by Roy Thomas, Barry Smith, and George Klein. Plus: An all new English Hulk story, written by Kevin Gosnell, with art by Paul Neary and John Richardson

MASTER OF KUNG FU (97): "Games of Death and Deceit" by Doug Moench, Mike Zeck and Gene Day

MICRONAUTS (26): The Micronauts are caught in the middle of a war between Hydra and Shield, in this story by Bill Mantlo, Pat Broderick and Armando Gill.

MOON KNIGHT (4): "A Committee of 5" by Doug Moench, Bill Sienkiewicz and Klaus Janson

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PETER PARKER (51): "Aliens and Illusions," by Roger Stern, Marie Severin and Jim Mooney.

POWER MAN AND IRON FIST (67): "Power Men". Script by Mary Jo Duffy, art by Kerry Gammill and Ricardo Villamonte.

ROM (15): Brandy Clark plans to marry a Dire Wraith in "A Wedding" by Bill Mantlo and Sal Buscema

SAVAGE SHE-HULK (13): Hellcat and Man-Wolf join the She-Hulk to battle strange creatures from another world. Script by David Anthony Kraft, art by Mike Vosburg and Frank Springer

SGT. FURY (162): Reprints *Sgt. Fury #68* by Gary Friedrich, Dick Ayers, and John Severin.

SPIDER-WOMAN (35): "Farewell to L.A." by Chris Claremont and Steve Leialoha.

STAR TREK (11): Once again, the Enterprise has to stop a living ship from destroying the Universe. Written by Martin Pasko, art by Joe Brozowski.

STAR WARS (44): "Duel the Dark Lord" concludes the *Empire* adaptation by Archie Goodwin, Al Williamson, and Carlos Garzon

THOR (304): Thor battles Pagan, leader of a sinister cult worshipping the Thunder God, with a guest appearance by Daredevil. Written by Roger McKenzie, with pencils by John Garcia and inks by Chic Stone.

WHAT IF (25): "What if . . .Thor Fought Odin Over Jane Foster." By Peter Gillis, Rich Buckler, and Dave Simons.

X-MEN (142): The X-Men battle the new Brotherhood of Evil Mutants to save the life of the mutant-hating Senator Kelly, in this story by Chris Claremont, John Byrne, and Terry Austin.

CRAZY (70): "Best of Crazy" Super Special.

HOWARD THE DUCK (9): Four duck tales, by Bill Mantlo, Steve Skeates, Gene Colan and Dave Simons. The menace of the Black Talon; Howard and Bev break up; two solo tales of Howard and Bev, respectively; and "Street People", by Lynn Graeme and Ned Sonntag

MARVEL PREVIEW (24): "Paradox" by Val Mayerik and Bill Mantlo. Cover by Paul Gulacy.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN (60): "Ivory Goddess" marks Roy Thomas' last issue, with art by John Buscema and Danny Bulandi

EPIC (4): "Sleeping Dogs" by Harlan Ellison; "Metamorphosis Odyssey: Delloran Revisited" by James Starlin; The Art of Shotaro Ishimori; "The Dreaming City" by Roy Thomas and P. Craig Russell; "Almuric: Part III" by Robert E. Howard, adapted by Roy Thomas and Tim Conrad; "Elephant Grass" by Marc Hempel; "Retrospect" by B.K. Taylor and James Fox: "Survivors" by Paul Kirchner; "Solar Plexis" by Rick Veitch.

MARCH

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN (214): Written by Denny O'Neil pencils by John Romita, Jr., inks by Jim Mooney. The Frightful Four seek vengeance on Spider-Man and Sub-Mariner

AVENGERS (205) The Avengers have to stop the Yellow Claw from creating a servile Master Race. Written by Bob Budiansky and David Micheline, art by Don Newton and Dan Green.

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CAPTAIN AMERICA (255): Written by Roger Stern, with art reproduced directly from John Byrne's pencils. The untold tale of Captain America's first case, titled "The Living Legend."

CONAN (120): Conan meets the god of death in this story by J.M.DeMatteis, John Buscema, and Bob McLeod

DAREDEVIL (169). The Kingpin and Bullseye team up to take over the mobs. By Frank Miller and Klaus Janson

DEFENDERS (93). "The Woman Behind the Man" by J.M. DeMatteis, Don Perlin, and Pablo Marcos

FANTASTIC FOUR (228) "Ego-Spawn" begins the investigation into the powers of Franklin Richards. By Doug Moench, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Joe Sinnott

GHOST RIDER (54): The Ghost Rider vs. the Orb and Johnny Blaze attempts to raise money for a motorcycle championship comeback. By Michael Fleisher and Don Perlin

INCREDIBLE HULK (257) In Egypt, the Hulk teams up with the Arabian Knight to battle Gog and Magog, in this story by Bill Mantlo and Sal Buscema.

IRON MAN (144) Iron Man finishes his battle with the Suntunion, by David Micheline, John Romita, Jr., and Bob Layton. Also in this issue, an all new story about Iron Man's first post-origin adventure by Micheline, Joe Brozowski, and Layton.

KING CONAN (5): Beginning the adaptation of L. Sprague DeCamp's "Conan the Avenger!" by Roy Thomas, John Buscema, and Danny Bulandi

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MARVEL SPOTLIGHT (11): A two-bit hood gains the power of Captain Universe and uses it to gain vengeance on a Maggia chief. By Steve Ditko and Bill Mantlo.

MARVEL SUPER ACTION (29): Reprints *Avengers* #68 by Thomas, S. Buscema, and Grainger.

MARVEL TALES (125): Reprints *Spider-Man* #148, written by Gerry Conway, with pencils by Ross Andru and inks by Esposito and Hunt.

MARVEL TEAM UP (103): Bugle free-lancers Peter Parker and Steve Rogers have to save JJJ from the Scorpion.

MASTER OF KUNG FU (98): Written by Doug Moench, with art by Mike Zeck and Gene Day.

MICRONAUTS (27): SHIELD battles Hydra, Baron Karza invades Earth, Biotron dies. Story by Bill Mantlo, pencils by Pat Broderick.

MOON KNIGHT (5): "Ghost Story" by Doug Moench, Bill Sienkiewicz and Klaus Janson.

PETER PARKER (52): The end of the White Tiger. Written by Roger Stern, with pencils by Marie Severin.

ROM (16): "All in the Family" by Bill Mantlo and Sal Buscema. Plus: The Saga of the Spaceknights introduces two more knights.

SAVAGE SHE-HULK (14): "Life in the Bloodstream" concludes the She-Hulk—Hellcat—Man-Wolf saga by David Anthony Kraft, Mike Vosburg, and Frank Springer.

SPIDEY SUPER-STORIES (51): Merry Marvel marches on, more or less.

SPIDER-WOMAN (36): Jessica and Lindsay encounter extra-terrestials on the way to San Francisco. Story by Chris Claremont, art by Steve Leialoha and Bruce Patterson.

STAR TREK (12): The *Enterprise* encounters its doppelganger in "Eclipse of Reason" by Luke McDonnell and Tom Palmer.

STAR WARS (45): A remote-controlled imperial probe-droid takes over Luke's ship with the intention of infiltrating and destroying the Alliance fleet. By Archie Goodwin and Carmine Infantino.

THOR (305): The return of the Galactus' former herald, Gabriel. Written by Mark Gruenwald and Ralph Macchio. Art by Keith Pollard and Chick Stone.

X-MEN (143): Kitty Pryde fights alone against a demon invader. By Chris Claremont, John Byrne, and Terry Austin.

CRAZY (71): Paul Kirchner, Howard Cruse, and more.

HULK (25): "Dreams of Iron, Dreams of Steel," by Bill Flanagan, Gene Colan, and Alfredo Alcala. "Carnival of Fools!" by Lora Byrne and Gene Colan. Dominic Fortune stars in a special Christmas story featuring a sadistic seven-foot tall Santa, by Chaykin and Denny O'Neil.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN (61): Written by Michael Fleisher, with pencils by John Buscema.

DC

FEBRUARY

ACTION COMICS (516): Superman declares war on Vandal Savage. Written by Marv Wolfman, art by Curt Swan and Frank Chiaramonte. Plus: Atom vs. Chronos, by Bob Rozakis, Alex Saviuk, and Vince Colletta. (11/25)

BATMAN (332): Batman faces the Electrocutioner, by Marv Wolfman, Irv Novick, and Frank McLaughlin. Also features a Catwoman solo. (11/13)

BRAVE & BOLD (171): Professor Nichols sends Batman into the past to team up with Scalphunter. Nemesis battles the Las Vegas syndicate in the back-up story. (11/25)

DC COMICS PRESENTS (30): "A Dream of Demons" by Gerry Conway and Curt Swan. "Whatever happened to the Golden Age Atom?" by Bob Rozakis, Alex Saviuk, and Vince Colletta. (11/13)

DETECTIVE COMICS (499): Batman fights Blockbuster. Batgirl must clear her alter-ego, Barbara Gordon, of a murder charge. (11/25)

FLASH (294): "The Fiend That Time Forgot" by Cary Bates and Don Heck. Also features a Firestorm story: "The Typhoon is a Storm of the Soul!" by Gerry Conway, Jim Starlin, and Bob Wiacek. (11/13)

GHOSTS (97): Dr. Thirteen faces the Spectre, in this story by Paul Kupperberg, Mike Adams, and Tex Blaisdell: "The Incarnadine Bridge" by Mimma Kin, Dick Ayers, and Rodin Rodriguez. "Deep Six Phantom" by George Kashdan and Ric Estrada; and "A Very Special Spirit" by Kashdan and Mike Nasser. (11/13)

GI COMBAT (226): Release date is (11/13)

GREEN LANTERN (137): Green Lantern terms up with Space Ranger to battle alien enemies. In the same issue, a new Adam Strange story by Laurie Sutton, Carmine Infantino, and Murphy Anderson. (11/25)

HOUSE OF MYSTERY (289): "The Comeback of David MacDannon" by J. M. DeMatteis and Mar Amongo; "Brother Bobby's Home For Wayward Boys and Girls" by DeMatteis and Ruben Yandoc; "The Lethal Legacy" by David Allikas and Fred Carrillo; and "Final Performance" by George Kashdan and Noly Zamora. (11/25)

JONAH HEX (45): "Blood Wedding" by Michael Fleisher, Dick Ayers, and Tony DeZuniga. (11/13)

JUSTICE LEAGUE (187): "Proteus says: All Things Must Change" by Gerry Conway, Don Heck, and Frank McLaughlin. (11/13)

LEGION OF SUPER HEROES (272): "The Origin of Blok" by Gerry Conway and Steve Ditko. Plus a free "Dial H for Hero" insert. (11/25)

MYSTERY IN SPACE (116): "Cold Hands, Warm Heart" by J. M. DeMatteis and Johnny Craig; "With His Head in the Stars" by Arnold Drake and Steve Ditko; "D-Day For Earth" by Steve Ringgenberg, Curt Swan, and Murphy Anderson; "A Murder of Time" by Dan Miskin, Gary Cohn, and Trevor Von Eeden; and "Cyborg" by Mike W. Barr, George Tuska, and Peter Jensen. (11/25)

NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY (14): "Luthor's Power Ploy" by Cary Bates, Kurt Schaffenberger, and Dave Hunt. Also, Superbaby encounters Zatara the Magician in a story by Rozakis. (11/25)

NEW TEEN TITANS (4): Teen Titans vs. JLA, by Marv Wolfman, George Perez, and Romeo Tanghal. (11/13)

SECRETS OF HAUNTED HOUSE (33): "Of Death and Life and Voodoo Drums" by Bob Rozakis and Dan Spiegle. "In the Attic Dwells Dark Seth" by George Kashdan and Fred Carrillo. (11/13)

SECRETS OF THE LEGION (2): The truth about Legion sponsor Rene J. Brande, by E. Nelson Bridwell, Paul Kupperberg, and Jimmy James. (?/?)

SGT. ROCK (349): (11/25)

SUPER FRIENDS (41): "The Toyman's Tricky Thefts" by Bob Rozakis, Ramona Fradon, and Vince Colletta, and "Dry Earth ... Stolen Waters," written, pencilled, and inked by Bob Oksner. (11/25)

SUPERMAN (356): "Battle of the Super-Hyper Powers" by Cary Bates, Curt Swan, and Frank Chiaramonte. Plus a World of Krypton tale. (11/13)

UNEXPECTED (207): "The Secret of the Second Star" by Mike W. Barr, Jack Sparling and Bruce Patterson; "Papa Provides" by Charlie Seeger and Charles Nicholas; "Monstrous Crime" by George Kashdan and Infante; and "Join Me In My Grave" by Kashdan and Jerry Grandenetti. (11/25)

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (248): (11/25)

WARLORD (42): (11/25)

WEIRD WAR TALES (96): (11/13)

WONDER WOMAN (276): "Seek the Serpent . . . Find Death" by Gerry Conway, Jose Delbo, and Dave Hunt. Also: The Huntress and Power Girl battle the Thinker in a Paul Levitz/Joe Staton/Steve Mitchell story. (11/13)

WORLD'S FINEST (267): Superman and Batman join forces with the Challengers of the Unknown to battle "The Gravity Masters" by Cary Buckett and Rich Buckler; "With This Gun I Thee Slay", a Black Canary solo story by Bob Haney and Trevor Von Eeden; "The Insect Invasion of Midway City", a Hawkman adventure by Alex Saviuk, Bob Rozakis and Rodin Rodriguez; "Future Shock" hits Red Tornado, by J. M. DeMatteis and Jose Delbo; and Captain Marvel wraps up his battle with the new Monster Society of Evil in a story by E. Nelson Bridwell and Don Newton. (11/13)

MARCH

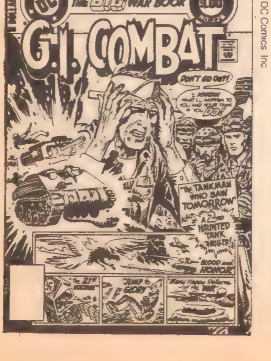
ADVENTURE COMICS (479): Features the premiere of "Dial H for Hero" as a full length series, scripted by Marv Wolfman and illustrated by Carmine Infantino. (12/22)

BATMAN (333): Batman joins Talia in "The China Syndrome" by Wolfman, Irv Novick and Frank McLaughlin. Robin teams up with Catwoman in "Shanghaid!" by Wolfman and Don Newton. (12/8)

BEST OF DC DIGEST (10): Secret origins. Release date is (12/8)

BRAVE & BOLD (172): Batman and Firestorm star in "Darkness and Dark Fire" by Gerry Conway and Carmine Infantino. Also in this issue is a Nemesis story by Cary Burkett and Dan Spiegle. (12/22)

DETECTIVE COMICS (500): "To Kill a Legend," by Dick Giordano and Brennert. "Once Upon a Time," by Len Wein and Walt Simonson. "The Too Many Crooks Caper," by Wein and Jim Aparo. "The Strange Death of Dr. Erdel," by Joe Kubert and Paul Levitz. "What Happens When a Batman Dies?" by Carmine Infantino, Cary Bates, and Bob Smith. "The Final Mystery of Edgar Allan Poe," by Lopez and Mike W. Barr. Rounding out the issue is a text story starring the Batman, written by Walter (Maxwell Grant) Gibson, creator of the Shadow. (12/22)



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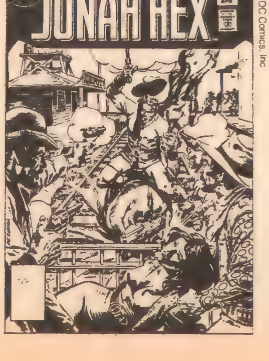

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DC COMICS PRESENTS (31): A Superman/Robin team-up entitled "The Deadliest Show on Earth!" by Conway and Jose Luis Garcia Lopez. "Whatever Happened to . . .the original Robotman?" by Bob Rozakis, Alex Saviuk, and Vince Colletta. (12/8)

DC SPECIAL DIGEST (7): Release date is (12/8)

FLASH (295): Flash battles super-gorillas in "In Grodd We Trust" by Cary Bates and Don Heck. Firestorm goes to the South Pacific in "Rain, Rain, Go Away . . ." by Gerry Conway, Jim Starlin and Bob Wiacek. (12/8)

GHOSTS (98): (12/8)

GI COMBAT (227): (12/8)

GREEN LANTERN (138): Green Lantern returns from the future for a showdown with Eclipso in a story by Wolfman and Staton. Adam Strange is featured in "Alanna's New York Adventure" by Laurie Sutton and Rodin Rodriguez. (12/22)

HOUSE OF MYSTERY (290): "I, Vampire" by DeMatteis and Sutton, and two more mystery thrillers by Rubeny and Chan. (12/22)

JONAH HEX (46): Jonah discovers the problems of married life in a story by Michael Fleisher, Dick Ayers and Tony DeZuniga.

JUSTICE LEAGUE (188): "The Metamorph War," by Conway, Frank McLaughlin and Don Heck. "Miracle at 22,3000 Miles" by Conway, McLaughlin, and Don Heck. "Miracle at 22,3000 Miles" by Conway, McLaughlin, and Rich Buckler.

JUSTICE LEAGUE (188): "The Metamorph War," by Conway, Frank McLaughlin, and Rich Buckler.

LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES (273): Release date is (12/22)

MYSTERY IN SPACE (117): "Lazurus Fire" by DeMatteis, Infantino, and Jerry Ordway. "D-Day For Earth" by Steve Ringgenberg, Curt Swan, and Murphy Anderson. "A Little Knowledge" by Bruce Jones and Tom Sutton. "Cyborg" by Mike W. Barr, George Tuska, and Dennis Jensen. (12/22)

NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERBOY (15): "A New Life For the Orphan From Krypton" by Cary Bates, Kurt Schaffenberger, and Dave Hunt. Plus a new back-up series: *Strange Encounters at the First Time* which presents historic meetings between Superboy and people who will later be important in his life. Leading off the series is "Superboy Meets Clark Kent" by Bob Rozakis, John Calnan and Tex Blaisdell. (12/22)

NEW TEEN TITANS (5): Origin of Raven by Curt Swan. Wolfman and Romeo Tanghal. (12/8)

SECRETS OF THE HAUNTED HOUSE (34): Mister E faces a modern-day Frankenstein in a story by Rozakis and Spiegle. Doctor Thirteen confronts The Spectre in "The Haunted House and the Spectre" by Paul Kupperberg, Mike Adams and Tex Blaisdell. Plus three more supernatural stories. (12/8)

SECRETS OF THE LEGION (3): The concluding chapter, by E. Nelson Bridwell, Paul Kupperberg, Jimmy Janes. (12/8)

SGT ROCK (350): Release date is (12/22)

SUPER FRIENDS (42): A Brazilian super-heroine, the Green Fury, joins the Super Friends to battle Green Thumb in "How Green Was My Gotham?" Also: "A Christmas with Everything" starring the Wonder Twins. Both stories by E. Nelson Bridwell and Romeo Tanghal. (12/22)

SUPERMAN (357): "Food For a God", wherein Superman battles Vartox, in a tale by Cary Bates, Swan and Chiaramonte. Plus: Superman 2020 in "The Troublemaker of New Metropolis!" (12/8)

SUPERMAN FAMILY (206): (12/8)

UNEXPECTED (208): "Factory of Fear" by Barr and Sparling. "Where Have You Gone, Solid Citizen?" by Elliot S. Maggin and Myrphy Anderson. (12/22)

UNKNOWN SOLDIER (249): The concluding chapter in the origin of the Faceless Warrior by Bob Haney, Dick Ayers and Gerry Talaoc. The first new Mademoiselle Marie solo tales in 20 years, by Robert Kanigher, Ayers, and Romeo Tanghal. (12/22)

WARLORD (43): Travis Morgaan goes "Berserk" by Mike Grell and Bob Smith. Omac battles the Vanquisher in a story by Dan Mishkin, Gary Cohn and Greg LaRocque. (12/22)

WEIRD WAR TALES (97): A new Creature Commandos tale by DeMatteis and Fred Carillo, and "The Master Infiltrator" by Bob Rozakis and Dan Spiegle.

WONDER WOMAN (227): "The Kobra Ultimatum" by Conway, Jose Delbo, and Dave Hunt. Plus: a Huntress solo by Paul Levitz, Joe Staton and Steve Mitchell.

Warren

CREEPY (125): Features "Once upon a Christmas Eve" by Will Richardson and Martin Salvador, "His Own Private Demons" by Roger McKenzie and Anton Caravana, "Circus of the Bizarre" by McKenzie, Carmine Infantino and Alex Toth, "Night Errant" by Mike Saenz, "Living Death Camp" by McKenzie and Auraleon and "Tempered Sword" by Manuel Auad and Alfredo Alcala. Cover by Ken Kelley.

EERIE (119): Includes the premiere of a new series, "Zud Kamish" by Jim Stenstrum and E.R. Cruz, "Domino" by Rich Margopolous and Ruben Yandoc, and "Haggarth-Chapter 2" by Victor de la Fuente. Cover by Bob Larkin.

VAMPIRELLA (94): Features "Death Machine" (Vampirella) by Rich Margopolous and Rudy Nebres, "Cassandra St. Knight" (a new series) by Margopolous and Auraleon, "Druids on 54th Street" (Pantha) by Margopolous and Jose Ortiz, "The Final Gift" by McKenzie and Esteban Maroto, "Big Shot" by Michael Fleisher and Delandro Nino and "Gun Play" by John and Val Lakey. Cover by Sanjulian, Enrich and Frank Frazetta.

1994 (17): Includes "Tools of the Trade" by Kevin Duane, Will Richardson and Jose Ortiz, "Mirage" by Richardson and Alex Nino, "Love is a Many Tentacled Thing" by Gerry Boudreau and Delandro Nino, the first chapter of "Ghita and the Unicorn of Auzza" by Frank Thorne and a color story "Kid Rust" by John Ellisech and Jose Ortiz. Cover by Jim Stenstrum and Will Richardson.

THE ROOK (7): Features a Rook story by Will Richardson and Luis Bermejo, "Chronos" by Lee Elias, a Voltarr story by Richardson and Alfredo Alcala and "Joe Guy" by Jim Stenstrum and Able Laxamana. Cover by Jordi Penalva.

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Heavy Metal

HEAVY METAL (Nov): Featured are two Moebius stories: "Blind Citadel" and "Red Beard and the Brain Pilot", the conclusion of "Progress" by Bilal, "Sans Family" by Nicole Claveloux, "Awaken" by Martin Springett, "Metropolitan Opera" by Caza and a Robert Silverberg sidebar. Front cover: Japanese artist Hajime Sarayama. Back cover: Chris Achilleos.

HEAVY METAL (Dec): Features Robert E. Howard's "Bloodstar" as illustrated by Richard Corben; "Double Evasion" by Moebius; "Valentina" by Guido Crepax; "The Cutter of the Fog" by the Schuiten Bros.; "What is Reality Papa?" by Ribera and Godard; and the end of the columns.

Aardvark-Vanaheim

CEREBUS (20): "Mind Games"

CEREBUS (21): "Captain Cockroach"

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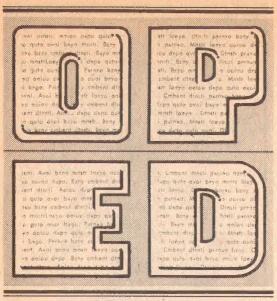

(continued from page 7)

that it is *Jack* who has undergone the terrible transformation; the hotel has not done it for him. I do not mean to degrade King's novel. It is extremely good, but it is also fairly shallow. Kubrick took that story and gave it depth. He doesn't take the easy way out by letting the hotel possess Jack and be responsible for the horrors to follow. It is *Jack*, the empty man who binds himself with the hotel, who commits the deeds. A *man* has been transformed, and that is more horrifying than all of the haunted elevators and fire hoses that we could imagine.

A point should be made that the poor acting of Jack Torrance is definitely *not* reflected in Jack Nicholson. He plays the part to perfection—a part that would not be easy, playing a man who is in turn playing other roles. But Nicholson handles them all, from joking madman to deadly serious husband, a difficult job since the two opposites are placed side by side in many scenes.

Shelly Duvall is excellent as the terrified wife. Not only is Wendy scared through almost the entire movie, but she is also incredibly stupid. She thinks writing well is "just a matter of getting back into the habit of writing every day." She interrupts Jack as he "writes." She tugs and tugs on a latched door, not understanding why it won't open. It takes her two pulls just to open the Snowcat door at the end of the movie. When she tries to get out of the locked bathroom, she fails at the lock and resorts to slashing her way out with her knife. The irony is that despite her vast weakness, she is *still* stronger than Jack. ("Your wife appears to be stronger than we imagined. Somewhat more resourceful," Grady tells Jack.) She slugs him with a bat; he never touches her. She breaks through the bathroom door with a kitchen knife; he fails to do the same with an ax. She escapes; he freezes to death.

But Kubrick commits another "crime." He doesn't play by the rules. In a horror movie, the audience is supposed to associate themselves with the victim, who is being attacked by the evil (killer) (madman) (etc.). By making Wendy such a weak character, though, and by de-emphasizing Danny, Kubrick makes us side with Jack. *We* are the ones carrying the ax! And we aren't too concerned if Wendy *does* get axed! And yet, another part of us wants her to escape from that madman (who is us). This is the tension felt in the beautiful Colorado Lounge scene as Jack backs Wendy up the stairs. Kubrick has put us in the uncomfortable position of associating with the madman who is also the weakest character in the movie.

Danny is in the movie too, of course, but who cares? Certainly not Kubrick. King's book centers around Danny—his thoughts, his talent. We associate with him. But not in the movie. To be sure, Danny plays an important role in the movie. It's just that the emphasis has been shifted to Jack.

There seems to be little point in going over the technical aspects of the film. Every reviewer (except Mr. Harvey) praised Kubrick's technical ability.

Stanley Kubrick, then, has crafted an incredibly complex movie. Its apparent shallowness is deceiving. The movie is not perfect (what movie is?), but it is a masterpiece nevertheless.

Although the *Comic Times* is a monthly magazine, I have not seen issue two out yet. I don't know if I missed it, or if publication was delayed.

Finally, are the subscription copies mailed in an envelope?

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Craig Miller
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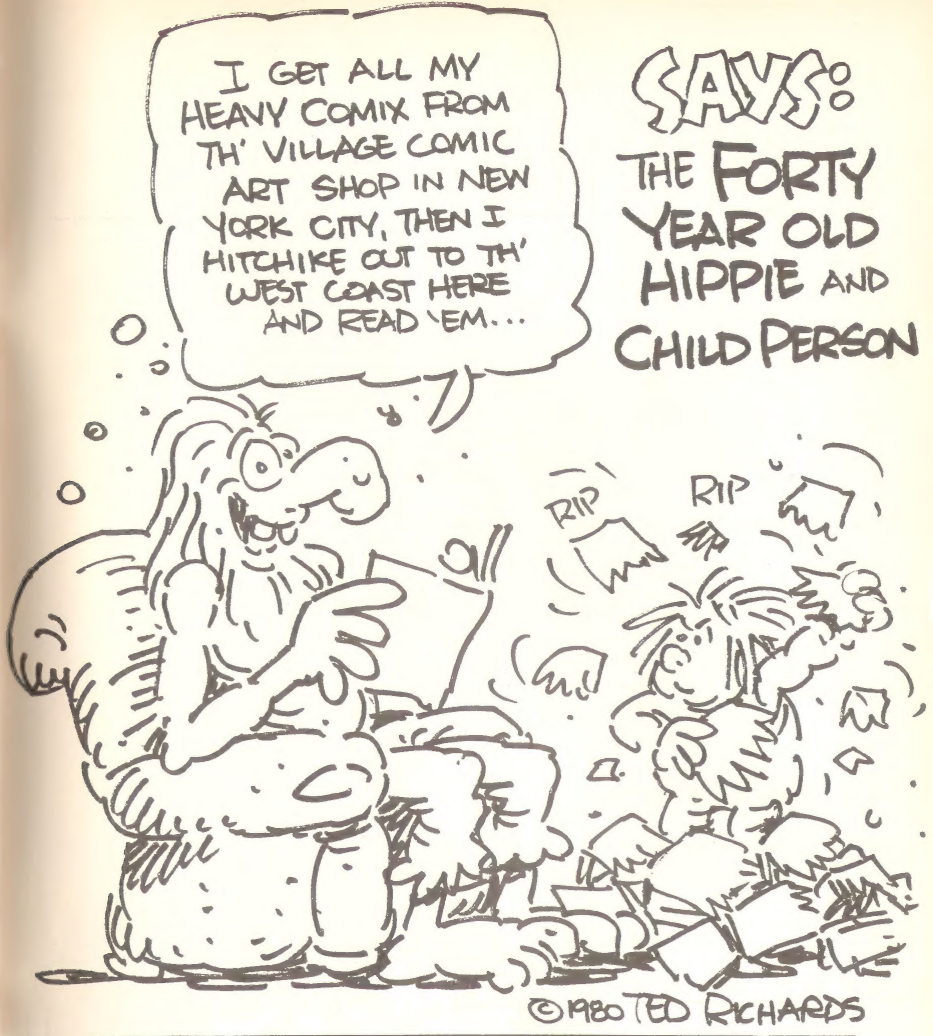
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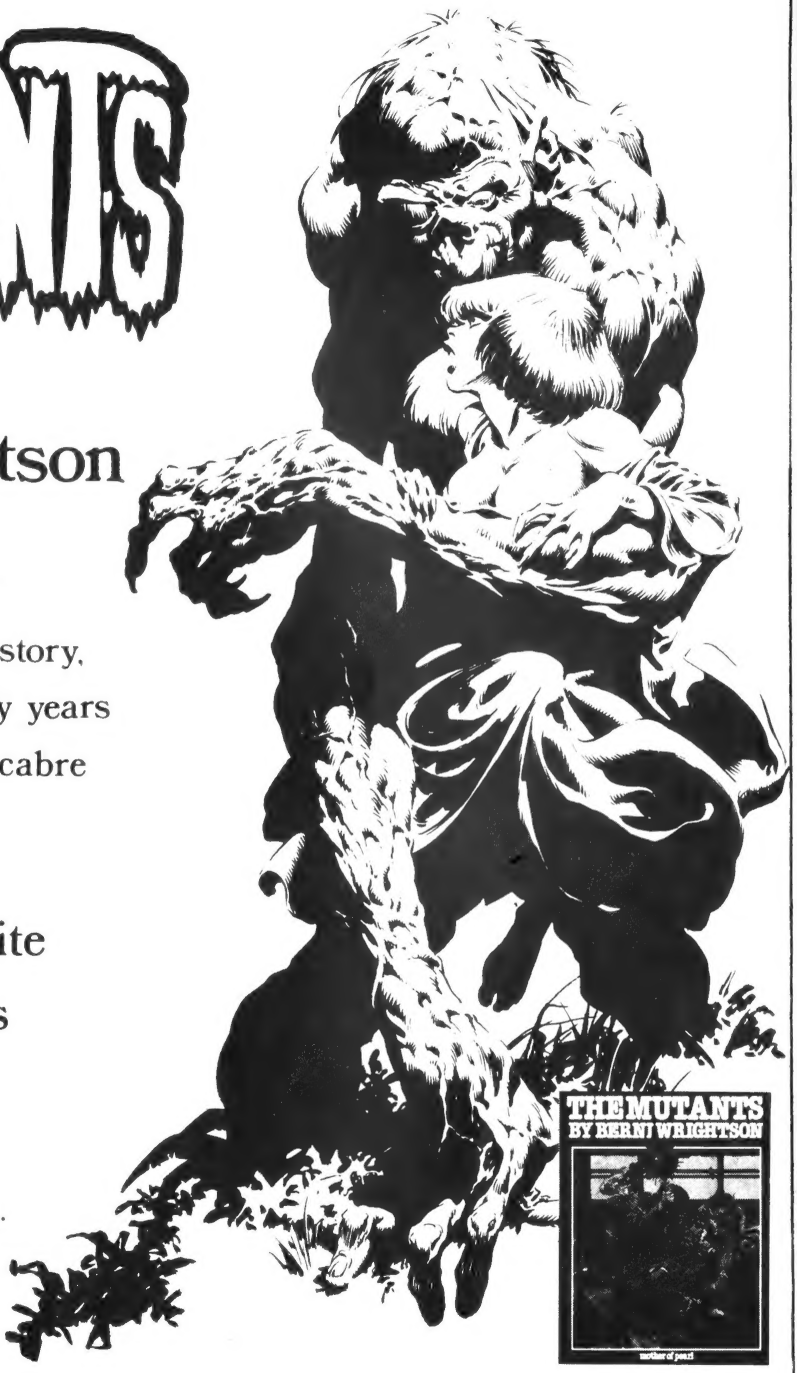

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